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FILIPPO STROZZI.

THE portrait which forms the frontispiece to this volume has been engraved from a very fine picture in the Strozzi Palace at Florence: it is there generally attributed to Bronzino. But the Venetian costume in which Filippo is painted would seem to indicate that it was done when he was a resident in Venice; and the opinion of several competent judges of art has attributed the picture rather to Titian.

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FILIPPO STROZZI.

FILIPPO STROZZI.

A History of the Last Days

OF THE

Old Italian Liberty.

142164

By T. ADOLPHUS TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF 'A DECADE OF ITALIAN WOMEN,' 'THE GIRLHOOD OF CATHERINE DE' MEDICI,' ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE.

In the course of that reading which led me, three or four years ago, to publish a volume on the Italian portion of the life of Catherine de' Medici, I came frequently across the singularly remarkable figure of Filippo Strozzi; and saw very clearly that no more strikingly and suggestively representative man could be found of the fast-moving and highly-coloured Italian life of that great and critical period, which, however much it may have been a 'renaissance' time for other parts of Europe, was for Italy the sunset hour, which preceded a night of three centuries' duration. A life more full, more many sided, more eventful, more variously and perfectly reflecting the image and characteristics of the social system to which it belonged, could hardly perhaps be found in any age or country. The story of such a life, with due embodiment of the social environment and atmosphere in which it moved, cannot fail to interest, amuse, and instruct, if only I have succeeded in putting the image of it before the reader as vividly and completely as I ought and hope to have done.

A consideration, honest at all events, of the duty of a writer, has led me to the determination to tell—as far as I can see it, and can tell it—the *whole* truth of any historical subject with which I may venture to meddle. To do otherwise appears to me like purposely leaving out some figures from an arithmetical operation, when the result of it is to form the basis of further and very important calculations. The omission of course will make all your deductions wrong. A sample fairly drawn from the sack of any part of the stores of history is useful. But a collection of facts so selected as to destroy their sample quality is, it seems to me, much worse than useless. And I trust to my readers agreeing with me in such a view for their tolerance of one or two passages, in which, truth and pretty speaking having been found incompatible, the former has been preferred.

It has been my aim, and is my hope, that any reader of the following volume, except one who has specially studied Italian history in its sources and its own language (should any such *par impossible* take my volume in hand), will on closing it feel that he is much more able to picture and realize to himself the Italian life and character of that important and interesting time, than the general histories of the country have enabled him to do. And I think that many English readers would wish to be able to do so. For a time has come, when the interest of England in Italian life, fortunes, and progress—interest both moral and material—will be rapidly increasing from day to day,—when we shall be more closely connected by sympathies, and by ties political, commercial, and social, with the people of Italy, than with any other *European*

nation; and when it will consequently become more than hitherto interesting to us to understand their character and capabilities, and to cultivate such an acquaintance with their historical antecedents, as may show us how and by what steps they have become what they are; and, by tracing the route by which the nation has travelled, enable us to judge of the path it may be expected to pursue in the future.

There can indeed be little doubt, that during the remaining years of the nineteenth century, the connection between England and Italy will be of a different kind, as well as closer, than it has been hitherto. It will no longer be merely that of a picture-dealer and his customer. Travelled Englishmen, fresh from their Italian visit, will no longer babble only of 'their Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff.' Italy will no longer appear to English eyes fully represented by the idea of a land of classical reminiscences, art galleries, picture-dealers' shops, and court balls. Events have already begun to awaken our generally much surprised and half-incredulous countrymen to the fact, that there is on that sunny side of the mountains a live and struggling nation with high aspirations, eager to take by the hand the only representative and champion of that high standard of social civilization, which issues in and proves itself by a capability of self-government.

We are scarcely yet aware in England to how great an extent this is the case, how cheeringly promising are the signs of a newly budding social life in the peninsula, and how much of sympathy and common feeling exists, or is rapidly being called into existence between ourselves and the Italian nations. And there are reasons which it

would be worth while to set forth at large in fitting season, but which can here be only compendiously mentioned, both why such should be the case, and why Englishmen are but very partially aware of the fact. Never, perhaps, was any country so travelled over for so long a series of years, as Italy has been by Englishmen, with so small a resulting knowledge of the people visited. In the old time, when a visit to Italy was a long, difficult, and costly affair, when only 'persons of quality' attempted it, and these went abundantly furnished with letters of introduction, they became acquainted, indeed, with the courts and court circles, and diplomatic residents of the capitals at which they sojourned. But in Italy, less than in any other country, was this any advance towards knowing the people. In modern days, on the other hand, when all the world travels, the Englishman doing his Italy, and never suspecting that there is aught to be 'done' there but the stock galleries, churches, views, antiquities, and court fêtes, does these as per guide-book; finds the beaten track, which conducts him to all these, duly prepared for him, and comes home with a competent idea of hotels, lodging-houses, and all the provisions for strangers, and of English life in Italy. But a horse in a mill has as much notion of the mechanism his wheel is putting in motion as the traveller obtains of the real life of the people whose country he is visiting. He does not even touch the body of Italian life at such points of contact as travellers in other lands are sure to meet with. He frequents special inns specially provided for him. He is surrounded by a class of people, who in their various capacities are specially engaged in serving, attending on,

and forwarding travellers; and whose business it is on all occasions to stand between him and the genuine people of the country. The very number of the travelling crowd, the uniformity of the objects of their travel, and the regular and organized uniformity of the preparations made for showing them what they are understood to come to see, and nothing else, all combine to shut them out from any real view of the people, and the conditions of their life. How much knowledge of the architecture of Westminster Abbey, and of the constitution and revenues of the chapter, is acquired by the procession of visitors marched round 'the curiosities' by the verger! And really Italy is mostly visited much on the same plan.

This is the reason why Englishmen know less than might have been supposed of Italy. The reasons why, on a more real acquaintance with the people, a greater amount of social promise than we are apt to imagine may be observed among them, and why a very remarkably greater degree of adaptation for understanding us, sympathizing with us, and working with us in advancing the cause of human civilization and freedom, than exists in most other European nations, will be found in the Italians, it is less easy so compendiously to state. That the facts are so, the present writer feels very strongly convinced. The causes of them are parts of a large subject. But it may perhaps shortly be said, that both circumstances would be found to depend very curiously upon the fact, that Italy is in a great measure taking up her history and her national existence from the point at which it was broken off some three hundred years ago. She is awaking from a long sleep, reviving from a period of hybernation.

And though it cannot of course be pretended that the time so passed is to *go for nothing*, that its results and traces are not numerous and deep; yet it is true that the heritage of the old Italian civilization, which has been so long in abeyance, is a most valuable and available possession,—is, and will henceforth be, more influential and active in modifying and shaping the coming social progress of the people, than the three hundred years of slumber-time;—and will direct that progress to issues that will assimilate the nation to ourselves much more than can be the case with other peoples, who have during these same years been walking in a very diverging direction from our own. For the old Italian, and especially Florentine, mediæval life was far less profoundly different from our own in thoughts, aspirations, political notions, and ideas of social aims and means, than is that of any other contemporary European people.

And these considerations appear to me to give an interest, beyond that which the subject might otherwise possess, to such studies as may help us to understand familiarly what the Italians were, when their active political and social life came to an end, when the pulse stopped, and the long lethargy came on; how, and in consequence of what faults, the death-trance crept over them; and what qualities may be expected to have survived it.

Florence, 8*th March*, 1860.

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FILIPPO STROZZI.

CHAPTER I.

Men of their time;—and men before their time.—Ages of transition.—The family home.—Death of the founder.—Florentine burial registers.—Foundation of the Palazzo Strozzi.—Anecdotes connected therewith.—Funeral of Filippo Strozzi the elder.—Liberty under a republic.—Filippo's heirs.—First preceptors of Filippo the younger.

ALL men are more or less the creatures of the age and society in which they live. The statement has the aspect of the merest truism. But in that *more* or *less* are involved all the points of character which distinguish the notabilities of the world into the two great classes; the men of their time, and the men before their time; the men of action, and the men of thought; the practical men, and the theorists; the leaders of the main body, and the pioneers of the grand army; the more objective, and more subjective minds. The former of these classes, the notable men of their time, the true representative men of the social system to which they belong, while appearing to lead, and in some sense really leading the world around them, are nevertheless essentially modified and fashioned by it. The real leading, the pioneer work done by the other class—the men before their time—is necessarily unrecognized by their contemporaries, and can only be estimated

subsequently by those who are capable of taking a large synthetical view of the road mankind has travelled, and intelligently tracing the true genealogy of opinion.

It is evident, however, that the remembrance of these latter, the genuine leaders, will survive to a more distant posterity; and that the constant tendency of the lapse of ages must be to leave their names still visibly inscribed on the epoch-marking boundary stones, which indicate the route of mankind's progressive march for many a long dim age and century behind us; while the figures of the strong practical men of their generation become gradually more and more indistinct, and finally undiscernible and forgotten. But these shorter-lived celebrities offer, for as long a period as the outlines of their figures can be made clearly visible, a richer subject to a biographer, in consequence of the very causes which insure their earlier extinction. The concrete has more hold on human interest than the abstract. Action is a better subject for narrative than speculation. And though the eternal laws which regulate the evolution of the future from the past course of mankind, may be better studied in the stories of those great thinkers who in every generation have been the first to reach each successive Pisgah-top, and look over the new promised land of progress, yet the living aspect of each age is better set forth in the lives of those who were the most emphatically the men of their time, neither before it, nor behind it, partaking of its virtues, and not exempt from its vices.

Such a man in a very eminent degree was Filippo[1] Strozzi.

The age in which he lived was not one, the characteristics of which could be epitomized and illustrated by the character of any ordinary man; for it was one of the most

[1] Note 1.

remarkable in the annals of mankind; one in which human intelligence and human passion were stimulated to an unusual degree of activity. Nor was it a period whose true reflex can be found in any idiosyncrasy, which commends itself strongly to our moral sympathies and affections; for the abnormal activity which intensified its vital action was the baneful fever which preceded dissolution. And that is a condition of social existence more fertile in great vices than in great virtues.

All death, we know, whether in the physical or social world, is but the precursor and preparer of new birth. And if much was dying in the age in question, much also was being born. But the process of dissolution and the process of creation were not proceeding with equal rapidity among the different members of the European family. The influences of decay were most preponderatingly felt, as was to be expected, where the old civilization was the oldest. But the symptoms of new birth were more perceptible where the society in which they had to develop themselves was less effete and more vigorous.

And Strozzi's world was that in which the signs of dissolution were multiform and unmistakable, while the faint glimmer of another dawn was barely visible above the horizon to the few 'men before their time,' and was wholly imperceptible to the 'men of their time.'

It was the great epoch of the *renaissance*, as it has been agreed to call it. But that which precedes *rebirth* ends old life, and is called death by those who look at it from that side. It is the night between two days. And while we, living on the Tuesday, look back to the daybreak, they whose life was on the Monday have had to watch the closing sunset.

It is notable how constantly it occurs, that a writer engaged on the elucidation of any special epoch of history,

begins by pointing out that it was 'a period of transition.' Each one discovers that the age he has specially studied was such, and tells the fact as if he thought it was a peculiarity; not seeming to be impressed with the conviction that in truth every age is so. But though it is certainly true that the phœnix-burning process, as Carlyle well calls it, has proceeded much more rapidly, and for that reason more noticeably, at some periods of mankind's history than at others, yet it is essential to bear in mind that it is always going on. And he who most habitually does so will be least liable to have his faith in the Divine governance of the world troubled by signs of decadence around him.

Filippo Strozzi was born in Florence on the 4th of January, 1489. He was the youngest of his father's children. His father, Filippo the elder, as he is called in Florentine history, had, besides several daughters, a son named Alfonso by his first wife, Fiametta Adimari, who died in 1477; and by his second wife, Selvaggia, a daughter of the Gianfigliazzi family, two sons, Lorenzo, and Filippo, the subject of these pages. The latter was named at the baptismal font, Giovanbattista. But when, in 1491, Selvaggia was left a widow, she chose to change the name of her child, then two years old, to Filippo, in memory of his father.

That great Florentine merchant and banker died at the summit of prosperity, the wealthiest man of his native city, while he was earnestly busied in pushing on the work of that magnificent pile still inhabited by his descendants. The erection of a grand family residence, not after the fashion of feudal territorial aristocracies, on the rural lands, from which their name, and wealth, and consequence is derived, but within the walls of their native city, was always a leading object of the ambition of the commercial

nobility of the great trading cities of Italy. And even in the case of the old territorial nobility, as that of Rome for instance, the town-loving habits of Italian life, and the political condition of the governments under which they lived, had from a period at least a century before the time in question caused the city mansion to supersede in its owner's estimate and care the old feudal fortresses, the importance of which was becoming more and more diminished by the existence of great armies, and the altered mode of warfare. But in Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Florence, and other similarly constituted communities, the great city residence, which was not so much the home of the individual head of the family as the head-quarters and rallying-point of the clan, and which was the visible and ostentatious manifestation of the family greatness to their fellow-citizens, was always the first aim of the Italian magnate. And Filippo Strozzi, the elder, marked the high tide of the family fortunes by the foundation of a palace that might fitly house a sovereign, and is still one of the leading ornaments of the city.

No efforts were spared to push on the great work. But death was too quick for the busy merchant, and Filippo was obliged to leave his family home unfinished.

He died in 1491, and was buried in the vast church of the neighbouring monastery of Santa Maria Novella, where the records of the convent indicate, from the great number of Strozzi burials before him, how widely spread and powerful the family had already become. There are few years in the century and a half preceding the birth of Filippo the elder in which the register has not the name of one or more of the race. Sometimes as many as three or four appear in one year. Nor are there wanting some among them with the grim words 'cum sanguine' appended to their names; indicating that they

had died by the hand of the headsman. The number of those thus marked in the register of one among the numerous burial-places of the city, supplies a notable commentary on the turbulent life and fierce laws of the rough old democracy. A curiously large proportion of the interments are noted as having taken place 'cum habitu:' meaning that the deceased was buried in the monastic habit of the order; a well-known device of the 'ages of faith' for obtaining at a minimum cost some portion at least of the spiritual advantages due to a monastic life. A few less devout persons preferred to go to their last resting-place 'cum habitu militari,' with the soldierly trappings in which they had lived. And one gorgeous-minded individual, in 1369, chose to be 'sepultus honorificè vestitus de scarlatto,' honourably buried in scarlet! He was a 'mercator,' like our Filippo. But the name of the latter stands simply in the register undistinguished by any word of remark.[1]

It was in the same year in which Filippo the younger was born that his father laid the foundation of a mansion that should be worthy of the richest citizen of Florence. Precisely at daybreak on the 6th of August, 1489,[2] the first stone was laid. The moment was selected in accordance with the advice of astrologers, who had been sedulously employed in watching for the propitious[3] moment.

'Just then,' writes the author[4] of a diary of the period, 'I chanced to be going to the butcher's at San Sisto, as they were beginning to lay the first stone in the

[1] This curious register, belonging to the monks of Santa Maria Novella, is printed in the ninth volume of the Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani.

[2] Note 2.

[3] Osservatore Fiorentino, vol. iv. p. 55.

[4] Tribaldo de' Rossi. It is printed in the twenty-third volume of the Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc.

middle of the front towards Santa Trinita. The foundations were dug to the depth of from twelve to sixteen braccia (from twenty-three to thirty feet, or thereabouts; and it is elsewhere stated that they were eight feet thick), and were filled in with mortar and gravel. And as I came up at that moment, Filippo himself was there; and as I stood by his side, says he to me, "Take a stone and cast it in;" and so I did. Indeed, I put my hand into my pocket while he stood by, and threw into the foundation an old *quattrino* marked with the *giglio*.' (The 'giglio,' is the well-known device of the city. The 'quattrino,' answering to about half a farthing of our money, may have been then worth about ten times its present value.) 'He would not have me do it: but, for a memorial of the occasion, I did it; and he was pleased. After I had gone away, and when I was in my shop with Lorenzo and Giorgio, I determined, in memory of the circumstance, to send for my son Guarnieri and Francesca my daughter. And Tita our maid, who was come to the shop for the meat, for it was a Thursday morning, went for the children. And Nannina, my wife, sent both the children to me dressed. And I took Guarnieri on my shoulder, and he looked down into the foundations. And I gave him a *quattrino* with the *giglio* on it to throw in. And I made him throw in also a bunch of damask roses that he had in his hand. "Will you remember this?" I asked him. He said "Yes," as did also Tita our maid, who was then with the children. Guarnieri was exactly four years and two days old; and Nannina had made him a day or two before a new tunic of taffeta, shot with green and yellow. May it all be to God's glory!'

The old diarist goes on to tell, that on the 11th of June, 1490, the huge stones of the massive rustic masonry, of which the first story is built, began to be laid. From

eight to ten of these stones were placed daily. So the work must have advanced rapidly. On the 27th of July was fixed in the wall the first of those massive and highly-ornamented iron rings which have been admired, drawn, and modelled by so many generations of[1] artists. They weighed, we are told, about two hundred pounds each, and cost from fourteen to twenty soldi a pound.[2] The price would be about equivalent to from sixpence to eightpence of our money, and must be multiplied to about ten to find its modern representative in money's worth.

A very few lines before this entry, the diarist records, that, 'on the 14th of May, 1491, on Saturday evening, died Filippo Strozzi, having been ill for three days. The whole city was much grieved on account of the superb fabric he was engaged on, considering him too a worthy man. He had begun to put the irons to the windows of his house, and had already got five of those in the front façade into their places. On the 17th of May, four hours before sunset, his body was honourably buried at Santa Maria Novella. His was one of the grandest funerals seen at Florence for a long time. There were four files of friars, and all the clergy of the cathedral, and those of San Lorenzo, a band of a hundred and fifty men, all the masons and workmen at the new building, and all the peasants of his estates. There were two rows of banner-bearers, and forty torch-bearers. All the kinsmen received mourning dresses; and four servants, dressed to represent the sons of the deceased, in mantles with trains, followed the body. And the new building is not to be stopped at all; for it is provided by the will that it shall be completed.'

The author of this characteristic record, who writes in the most genuine cockney Florentine dialect as spoken

[1] Note 3. [2] The Tuscan pound of twelve ounces.

then and at the present day by the populace, and spells the sounds exactly as they were pronounced, with the most perfect indifference to grammar, orthography, and even the division of the words;—who goes at sunrise in August to buy the meat, it being Thursday, and carries it to his own 'shop,' whence the maid comes to fetch it;—who is considerately dissuaded by the millionaire banker from expending half a farthing in commemoration of his palace; and who piously trusts that his little boy's new shot-silk jerkin may be to the glory of God, was, we are told by the learned[1] editor of his diary, a banker and merchant, of a very noble, ancient, and powerful family, and himself a very wealthy man. And surely the ways of life and modes of thought, which are thus indicated to have been those of the rich patrician traders of Florence, would seem to argue a very tolerable degree of primitive simplicity and unostentatious thriftiness. Yet Dante's well-known lamentation over the old frugal habits and virtuous plainness of the generations preceding his own, lost for ever in the corrupt and effeminate luxuriousness of his own time, were written some two hundred years before the wealthy banker, Tribaldo de' Rossi, carried his own meat from the butcher's at sunrise.

It is the old mistake of looking backwards instead of forwards for the good time of our ideal, which is to be unvexed and unstained by the faults and follies that hamper and trouble us in the actual life around us. And were it not that mankind does seem at last to be beginning to open its eyes to the fallacy, we should doubtless be admired in our turn by our great-grandchildren for our virtuous and simple life as contrasted with their own degeneracy.

[1] Fra. Ildefonso di San Luigi, the editor of the Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani.

But any 'laudator temporis acti' who persists in regretting 'the good old time,' may perhaps find matter of instruction in another view of that social system into which our hero was born, afforded us by another writer's account of the elder Filippo Strozzi's preparations for the building of his new house. This time it is his son, our hero's elder brother, Lorenzo, who is the chronicler; and the difficulties in the way of the great design which he recounts are of a different kind from those which the skill of architects and the science of astrologers could overcome.

Lorenzo was the family biographer. His life of his brother Filippo the younger is our most important source of information concerning his career. He wrote also[1] more compendiously a life of his father, in which we find the following remarkable passage:—

'Filippo, having abundantly provided for his family, being anxious too rather for fame than wealth, and having no better nor surer mode of leaving a memorial of his name, conceived the idea of erecting a building which should make him and all his famous throughout Italy, and beyond its frontiers. He was naturally inclined, moreover, to building, and had no little understanding of it. But there stood one considerable difficulty in his way; for since it was likely enough that those in power[2] might deem their own glory eclipsed by that of another, he feared to take a step which might generate envy of him. He began, therefore, by saying here and there, that the smallness of his house, and the largeness of his family, made it necessary to provide a lodging for them, as he would fain have them housed at his death. So he began to speak distantly about the matter, first with masons, and then with architects, merely putting forward the necessity he was under of providing his family with a lodging. And sometimes

[1] Note 4. [2] Note 5.

he spoke as if he had resolved to begin forthwith; and then again he pretended that he could not make up his mind to spend all at once what it had cost him so much toil and industry to scrape together; astutely hiding from every man his intentions and object, only with a view of more surely attaining them; and always declaring that he only wanted a plain and comfortable citizen's residence, useful but not splendid. But the masons and architects continually increased his plans, as is their wont; which was exactly what Filippo wished, although he pretended quite the contrary, saying that they were driving him to what he neither wished nor had the means to accomplish.' (The reader should bear in mind, that it is a most loving son who is writing of a father he highly venerated, and whose exquisite prudence he conceives that he is holding up to universal admiration.) 'To this must be added, that he who was in[1] power, thinking that as all the adversity and prosperity of the city depended on him, so also its beauty or deformity was to his credit or the reverse, was desirous that Florence should be made illustrious by ornaments of all kinds. And considering that a great and costly undertaking, which could not be exactly limited or seen the end of, might not only very probably injure Filippo's credit, as is often the case with merchants, but might possibly bring about his entire ruin, he[2] for these reasons began to take an interest in the matter, and to desire to see the plans. And when he had seen them, he suggested much additional expenditure, and especially the massive rustic work of the exterior wall. . . . Filippo made a show of respectful opposition; occasionally expressing to his friends his regret at having embarked in an undertaking of which he could only pray to God that the upshot might turn out well:—that he wished he had never

[1] Lorenzo de' Medici. [2] Lorenzo.

thought of it, rather than to find himself in such perplexity. And in this manner, the more he pretended to fear the expense, in order to hide the greatness of his mind and of his wealth, the more he was urged on and encouraged to undertake it. And by means of this sagacity and careful prudence, he accomplished that which otherwise he would either have never been permitted to do at all, or the achievement of which would have been very injurious to him. And it was considered certain throughout the city, that so great an undertaking would absorb all his means before it was brought to a termination. But he the while was thinking of finishing it in the most perfect manner out of his yearly profits, without touching his capital; which he would assuredly have done if death, which often prevents magnificent and noble undertakings, had not interrupted him.'

Such was the amount of individual liberty realized in Florence after so many centuries of experiments in various methods of self-government. The wealthy banker is as much afraid of owning the extent of his wealth as some miserable Jewish Isaac of York, living half tolerated under the iron rule of a mediæval semi-civilized feudal state. It is only under favour of the general belief that he is ruining himself, that he can venture to spend his own money according to his own wishes. It may be said that, when this was the case, liberty had already perished in Florence; that the city was then oppressed by a tyranny all the more dangerous and jealous, in that it was abusive and unrecognized. But there is reason to suspect that the roots of the evil, made manifest by such a state of things as that disclosed by the biographer's eulogy of the rich citizen's 'sagacity' and 'prudence,' must be looked for deeper than in the mere circumstance of the Medicean tyrannical preponderance. The Medici were

in when Filippo the father found his freedom of action limited in a manner so strange to our ideas, and so normal apparently to his own notions of civil life. But we shall presently find Filippo the son struggling with democratic despotism, exercised in a yet more remarkable manner, at a time when the Medici were *out*. And both instances are but prominent proofs of the exceedingly weak and low conception of individual freedom comprised in an Italian mediæval democrat's notion of liberty. The entire course indeed of the history of those states, in which Sismondi finds the true model of free institutions, offers the same fact to the historical student's observation. They were fully impressed with the value of that freedom which is enjoyed by a community living under laws made and voted by themselves, instead of imposed on them by the will of a ruler. But they seem to have had little appreciation of the evils of the tyranny which may be inflicted by laws so made. There was no sense of individual right to curb the oppression of majorities. And majorities in those free communities were accordingly pitiless in their despotism. 'Væ victis!' Down with the outvoted! was the universal sentiment acted on, without mitigation, by each ascendant party in turn.

And so very far is the social result from answering to our Teutonic notions of liberty, that one is led by the contemplation of it to consider whether it may not be held to be proved that such a large, instinctive, and deep-seated reverence for human free-will, as shall insure respect for it in others, as well as desire for it in ourselves, be not a sine quâ non constituent in the idiosyncrasy of a people capable of advantageous self-government.

It was provided by the will of Filippo the elder, that five thousand crowns should be spent annually on the palace until its completion. One half of it became the

property of Alfonso, Filippo's son by his first wife; and the other half of Lorenzo and Filippo the younger, under the tutelage of Selvaggia Gianfigliazzi, their mother. There does not appear to have been much kindly feeling between Alfonso and his stepmother and her children. The latter religiously complied with the injunctions of Filippo's will, and in time completed their half of the palace accordingly. Alfonso, on the contrary, neglected to comply with the injunctions of his father's will in this respect, and incurred much blame in consequence. 'If he spent anything on the palace,' says his half brother, Lorenzo, 'he did it against his will; and it is therefore his fault if so great and magnificent a work remains still incomplete.'[1] And Giovanni Cambi, writing from day to day the gossip of Florence in his contemporary chronicle, tells us that 'Selvaggia, as executrix on behalf of her sons Lorenzo and Filippo, finished the half of the palace which the will assigned to them according to the intentions of the testator. But Alfonso did nothing, contenting himself with living in the basement story, and building a little now and then, because he could not avoid it. So that the fabric remains unfinished, to the disgrace of their father.'[2]

Selvaggia seems to have been not only a prudent and conscientious administratrix, but a fond and anxious mother. Her youngest boy, whom at her husband's death she renamed Filippo, 'as a memorial and consolation for the loss of her dear husband,'[3] was her especial darling. He was, it is recorded, a remarkably handsome child, and

[1] Gaye, Carteggio d' Artisti, vol. i. p. 357.

[2] Istorie di Giovanni Cambi, Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani, vol. xxi. p. 51.

[3] Vita di Filippo Strozzi, scritta da Lorenzo, suo fratello. The edition, p. 10, of this work, quoted as 'Vita di F. S.,' is in every case that prefixed to Niccolini's Filippo Strozzi. Florence, 1847.

very like his father. The propensity to study, which he manifested in his early boyhood, determined his mother to abandon all thought of bringing him up to the profession of his father, and to devote him to a literary career. But as she was, says her son Lorenzo, exceedingly anxious and particular about the moral character of her children, she was more careful, in selecting tutors for them, to look for men of unimpeachable moral character, than to assure herself of their literary competency. Two grammarians and a singing-master were thus appointed to superintend the young millionaire's studies; but he profited little by their cares, and later in life complained to his brother Lorenzo of the time he had lost in his youth in consequence of his mother's injudicious choice, 'excusing her, however,' says the biographer brother, 'on the ground that it was a matter wholly beyond her capacity.'

As soon as he was old enough to have a voice in the matter himself, he hastened to get rid of the preceptors chosen on his mother's principles, and placed himself under Marcello Virgilio, as a Latin master, and under the Frate Zanobi Acciaiuoli in Greek, who were, we are assured, eminent in their respective specialties. And if any opinion may be formed of the preceptors from the product of their labours, as shown in the pupil, it is to be supposed that they were selected on principles diametrically opposed to those which had regulated the choice of the good Selvaggia. For Filippo became a very competent scholar, but by no means a very admirable man.

CHAPTER II.

Filippo's first tutors.—Morality in Florence.—Savonarola.—He produced no permanent results.—His influence in Florence.—Great bonfire of objects of luxury.—Pious songs and dances.—Martyrdom of Savonarola.—Florentine intolerance fatal to civil liberty.—Earliness of Italian civilization a disadvantage.—Exile of the Medici in 1494.—Matrimonial speculations.—Overture from the Medici.—Filippo doubts, fears, calculates;—and finally determines to play for high stakes—Consequences of that determination in Florence.—Party politics.—Total absence of civil liberty.—Filippo's trial,—defence,—sentence,—and marriage.

LORENZO the Magnificent died at his villa, Careggi, near Florence, on the 9th of January, 1492, not quite a year after the death of Filippo Strozzi the elder; and the band of Platonizing scholars and wits, who had found a new 'olived Academe' in its gardens and colonnades under Lorenzo's auspices, were dispersed by that event. Learning, therefore, and men enthusiastically devoted to the revived pursuit of it, were abundant in Florence, when Selvaggia Strozzi, blunderingly, as 'in a matter quite beyond her capacity,' found herself driven by her determination to secure good men for her son's tutors to have recourse to bad scholars. Her book-loving son, Filippo, as we have seen, reversed the selection as soon as he was able. And the scholarly world into which he was entering no doubt agreed in his opinion, that his mother's views on the subject were very narrow.

For the half-avowed Paganism of the magnificent

Lorenzo's pet philosophers, and their inevitable emancipation from the trammels of an incredible creed, had not produced a high level of moral character among them. The old religion professed, and was popularly at least supposed to be the intimate ally and patroness of morality; and morality suffered, in the eyes of the Galilio-like votaries of the new learning, from having been found in such bad company. The most enlightened men in Florence at that time were some of the worst; and a skilful sociologist would have pointed to this symptom as one of the most fatally unerring indications of approaching dissolution.

Sociologists, who have become skilful only by means of post-mortem examinations of that and other such bodies politic, of course could not prescribe at the bed-side of *that* patient; yet one strange man there was, assuredly no master of social science, and as surely not enlightened by any Pisgah-top views of mankind's subsequent course, who did perceive, and partly comprehend the deadly nature of the social signs around him. A very notable figure indeed on that stage, where a death-scene was in course of representation, was the monk Girolamo Savonarola, with his energetic convictions of the possibility of putting new wine into those old bottles. The strange man's own account of his insight into the malady of the world around him is, that he was inspired; and so in certain sense he doubtless was; though with a very far from plenary inspiration. The impulsive, fervid-minded man strove hard to arrest the deathward progress, and resuscitate the doomed social system; so very far from plenary was his inspiration. But resuscitation is well known to be a most painful process to the patient. So the sick world burned its importunate doctor out of the way, that it might die in peace.

Why did the undoubtedly very powerful reactionary movement effected by Savonarola utterly fail to produce any lasting result whatever? And why did the analogous Puritan influence among ourselves in the seventeenth century succeed in deeply modifying the entire course of the subsequent history of the world? It was not that the aims and methods of the Tuscan reformer were wild, immoderate, and unwise, while those of our English Puritans were practical, wise, and temperate; for we all know that the latter were very far from being so. It was not that any fruitful results, which might otherwise have been expected to be realized from the friar's life and labour, were successfully suppressed and crushed by the burning of his body, and the ever-so-careful dispersion of the ashes thereof; for after many an experiment, made, alas! on by no means vile bodies, it is now at last beginning to be recognized among the foremost nations of mankind as a clear fact, that opinion, howsoever erroneous, cannot be killed and extirpated by any such process. And indeed, in the case in question, Savonarola was at least as powerful in Florence after his martyr's death as during his life. Nor, lastly, can it be suggested that our bible-and-sword testifiers had in them the heroic stuff which is capable of moving mankind, and that the masses on which they operated had a sufficient appreciation of heroism to be capable of being moved; whereas, either the friar had it not, or the materials he had to work on were too far gone in corruption to be leavened by any whatsoever yeast. Not so. Rarely in the history of the world has the power of the tongue produced more violent effects upon a community of men than did the preaching of the friar upon the men of Florence.

Not easily to be forgotten in a life-time, however engrossingly filled subsequently, was that scene in the great

square at Florence, which the lad Filippo Strozzi must have witnessed in 1496. It was the last day of carnival in that year, and Savonarola and his disciple and coadjutor, Domenico of Pescia, had succeeded in persuading the Florentines to celebrate the day in a new fashion. All the wickedness of the city, as represented in whatever articles might be deemed to minister to luxury, or wantonness, or worldliness, was to be burned on a vast bonfire. A huge pyramidal scaffolding was raised in the old piazza, filled with faggots inside, and encircled with tiers of great shelves around the exterior for the reception of the articles to be sacrificed. It will be readily conceived, that when monkish fanaticism was permitted to pronounce on the tendency of objects to promote luxury and worldliness, the condemned goods and chattels were of the most miscellaneous description. No doubt much was destroyed that deserved no better fate. For the age and society were corrupt, and both literature and art had of course ministered to the prevailing tastes. But property to an immense amount, of the most innocent description, was sacrificed by the suddenly-kindled zeal of its possessors. And in many instances Art sustained irreparable losses. Fra Bartolomeo, who shortly afterwards took the Dominican habit in 1500, Lorenzo di Credi, and many other artists, were induced to commit all their studies and designs from the nude to the flames.[1] Books in extraordinary quantities were heaped on the shelves of the doomed pyramid. The crusade was especially hot against the works of Boccaccio and Pulci, and others of similar character. But the Puritan zeal extended its condemnation to whole categories of articles of a much less questionable kind. We find it recorded, for instance, that vast quantities of false hair were offered up by converted

[1] Note 6.

vanity. Women brought their head-dresses, costly shawls from the East, rouge-pots, essences, bottles of orange-flower water (!), and perfumes of all sorts. Men contributed to the holocaust dice and dicing-tables, chess-boards of costly materials and artistic fashion, harps, lutes, and all kinds of musical instruments, playing cards, drawings, pictures, with 'magical and superstitious books in incredible quantities.'

Then the fire was set to the heterogeneous mass by the hands of the magistrates; and while the flames, leaping high, threw fitful and quaint lights and shadows over the huge irregular mass of the palace of the republic, with its slender overhanging tower, and the beautiful arches of the 'loggia' of Orgagna, the excited fanatics danced round the pile to the sound of trumpets and shouts. 'So that,' says the historian Nardi,[1] 'upon that occasion the boys had a carnival festival sufficiently magnificent and devout, in place of the inveterate custom of the populace to amuse themselves on that day with the stupid diversion of throwing stones, and other still more damnable practices of this our depraved generation.'

Of all the popular and mundane diversions in vogue, dancing was the only one which found favour in the sight of Savonarola. But as the people were then in the habit of singing in chorus while they danced, the great reformer thought it desirable to hallow the amusement by providing words of grace for the accustomed songs. Accordingly, Girolamo Benivieni, 'the best poet of the day,' (?) says the historian Pignotti, and an enthusiastic disciple of Savonarola, 'abased his muse' to the production of holy dancing songs, which were sung by the people and the friars of St. Mark, who came from their convent into the

[1] Istorie della Citta di Firenze di Jacopo Nardi, vol. i. p. 113.—Edit. Florence, 1842.

piazza to dance with them in monstrous rounds, formed of one friar and one lay citizen alternately, all joining hands!

Some specimens of the hymns thus produced by 'the best poet of the age' have been preserved. And the illustration they afford of the tone of mind and sort of devoutness with which Savonarola sought to stem the extreme licentiousness and corruption of the time, will excuse the reproduction of the extraordinary doggrel. One runs thus.[1] The original may be seen in the note.

"Greater pleasure sure than this,
Or sweeter no man ever had;
Than for Jesus Christ's dear sake
To run with zeal and gladness mad.

"The Christian always seeks and loves
That which wise men deem most sad;
Poverty, grief, and pain, and tears
The Christian loves, because he's mad.

"Greater pleasure sure—eta da capo.

"Discipline and penitence
Make the Christian ever glad;
And his chief delight and joy
Torments are—because he's mad.

"Greater pleasure sure—eta da capo.

"Then let each man cry with me,
Mad, mad, mad, we'll ever be."

Here is another:—

"I will give thee, soul of mine,
One remedy better far than all;
It's good for every mortal ill;
And some the medicine madness call.

"At least three ounces take of hope,
Three of faith, and six of love,
Two of tears, and set them all
A fire of holy fear above.

[1] Note 7.

"Let them boil three hours good;
Then strain them off, and add enough
Of humbleness and grief to make
Of this blessed madness quantum suff."

It is curious to mark the similarity—a genuine family likeness—which is observable between these manifestations of Italian and—more or less—Romanist fanaticism, and those so familiar to us of our own seventeenth-century Puritans. There is perhaps, as might be expected, somewhat more of gross materialism, and a still fainter gleam of spiritual underlying feeling in the southern-grown piety, than in that of our more northern race. But the attempt to bring the invisible within ken by pulling it down to us, instead of raising ourselves up to it, the cunning trick of seeking to turn natural low instincts and popular habits to spiritual uses by a simple change of phraseology, the irreverent familiarity, and, what is more curious, the identity of the roots of all this in the same misconceptions of man's spiritual nature, and the means of purifying it, are equally remarkable in either case.

The lads of the city seem to have had a large part in this extraordinary ceremony. Bands of the young citizens, dressed in white, and bearing olive-branches in their hands, were organized, and sent to pass from house to house through the different wards, calling on the inhabitants to bring forth 'the accursed thing,' meaning the pictures, and the rouge-pots, and wigs, &c., and contribute them to the great fire.[1] These companies of youths then marched in procession to the piazza, and sung 'lauds in the vulgar tongue' during the burning. Now Lorenzo, Filippo's elder brother, and subsequent biographer, who was at that time fourteen years old, was afterwards an

[1] Nardi, loc. cit.

enthusiastic partisan and disciple of Savonarola. It is probable enough, therefore, that he was among the white-robed young apostles who went forth on the crusade against the worldly vanities; and must at all events, there can be little doubt, have been present at the great bonfire in the piazza. Filippo was then only eight years old; and in after years his sympathies, opinions, and habits of life were very far from being those of the Piagnoni, as Savonarola's followers were called. And if, as in all probability is the case, he also witnessed the memorable scene that has been described, the impression left by it on the clever, worldly, free-thinking millionaire *en herbe* was doubtless by no means of the kind which the fanatic reformer would have wished.

Very little more than two years after the great burning of pomps and vanities, on the 23rd of May, 1498, the boy may have witnessed another fire lighted up in the same square, also in the interest of the purity of the faith. But this time it was the reforming friar himself who was burned at the stake; receiving the fiery crown of martyrdom at the hands of Alexander VI., the Borgia pope, who judged it essential to the conservation of Christ's religion divinely intrusted to his guardianship, that the eloquent preacher against abuses and corruption, clerical as well as lay, should thus be prevented from further spreading heresies. It was quite natural that the Borgia should desire to suppress Savonarola, as much as the reformer had desired to suppress immorality. But both fell into the same error in supposing that a spiritual foe could be vanquished by material means. A very few years more of life would have shown Savonarola that by burning books and pictures he had burned out no portion whatever of wickedness from the hearts of the Florentines; and the infamous Alexander had time to see that the

atrocious murder of the friar had no power to extinguish the spirit which had animated him.

It was by the ecclesiastical authority of Pope Alexander that Savonarola was burned. But no such sentence would have been executed in Florence, even if it had been promulgated, unless the party who had for the nonce obtained the upper hand in the city had so willed it. It was the old barbarous *Væ victis!* Death to the outvoted! And Medicean tyranny had no hand at least in this damning deed. For the Medici then were *out*, having been exiled in 1494. The scheme of theocratical tyranny conceived, and to a wonderful degree realized by the fervid heart, overpowering energy, and narrow intellect of the immortal friar, was utterly impracticable and intolerable. He had glowing in his mind his idea of human life and social government. And he could conceive no other duty nor aim than to impose it by crushing violence on such of his fellow-citizens as might refuse to accept it. His opponents, known in Florentine history as the 'Arrabiati,' the violent radical party, as democratical and as hostile to the Medici as Savonarola, but disinclined to religious Puritanism,—had also *their* idea; and were equally incapable of comprehending either the duty or the policy of permitting minds so constituted as to differ from them to exercise the inalienable right of holding, professing, teaching, and living by their own opinions. The depraving influence on the human mind of the deep-seated fundamental notion, that truth is, by any means at man's disposition, discoverable and tenable with such certainty and infallibility as to give the supposed holders of it the right to force their conclusions on their fellow-men, had tainted the heart and intellect of all Europe far too profoundly for any such measure of tolerance, mutual respect, and forbearance as could alone

make civil liberty possible to be yet attainable even by the wisest.

It is the favourite boast of Italy, that her civilization is the oldest in Europe; that she was far advanced in art, literature, and the science of social life at a time when the other nations were but beginning to emerge out of barbarism. But if what is said of individuals may be held to be true also of nations,—that once at least in the life of each is given the opportunity, which 'taken at the flood leads on to fortune,' but which, neglected or misused, returns not again,—it may be deemed rather a misfortune than an advantage for Italy that *her* golden moment, the spring-time of young civil life, which should have led the nation on to a summer fruitful in progressive civilization, occurred so early in the history of modern Europe. That baneful parent idea, of possible infallibility, which lies at the root of all tyranny, intolerance, bigotry, and other such dissocializing evils, was more unquestioned and all-powerful in the world in Italy's day of hope and struggle than it had become when we, more fortunate, had our time of analogous crisis. Far as the world is yet from having outgrown the ubiquitous influence of that poison,—busy as it is yet around us in killing charity, obscuring truth, preventing spiritual improvement, and impeding civil progress,—still, great heroes had done battle with the evil in the interval, and in some degree unconscious of all the precious value of their blows had by that time scotched the snake. And in contrasting the successful issues of our own social development with Italian failures, the magnitude of the advantage thus secured to us should not be left out of consideration.

The Medici, who from one end of their history to the other merit more probably than any other historical family the execration of mankind, are yet made by Florentine

historians to bear too exclusively the blame of having destroyed civil liberty in Florence. A tolerably shrewd observer, who should have marked those two fires in the old *piazza*, the burning of the vanities, and the burning of the reformer two years afterwards, might have ventured to predict the issue to the siege of Florence despite the heroism of the citizens. This people, the prophet would have said, assuredly will not keep civil liberty alive among them.

The Medici, as has been said, were in exile at this period. When Charles VIII. of France invaded Italy in 1494, for the purpose of maintaining his pretensions to the kingdom of Naples, the Florentine democracy were instinctively hostile to him; while the Medici, then represented by Piero, the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, with an instinct as true to the interests of their 'order,' were inclined to come to terms with him. Piero accordingly, having gone out to meet the invader at Sarzana, about half way between Florence and Genoa, made a treaty with him so humiliating to the proud republic, that the burst of indignation which blazed through the city, when it was made public on his return, sufficed to drive him and all his into banishment. As usual, the Medicean palaces were sacked by the populace. As usual, the numerous exiles who had been driven from their homes by the Medicean faction were recalled. The late winning party became once again the losers; and the recently oppressed were by the turn of Fortune's wheel elevated into oppressors. And this eclipse of the Medicean sun lasted from the sixth till the twenty-fourth year of Filippo Strozzi's life. And it was during this period that he had to take the first important step in life; a step which the temporary ascendency of the democratic party hedged about with especial difficulties.

Filippo, in his twentieth year, noted already for talent and attainments, remarkable for great personal advantages of face and figure, son of the great banker and leading patrician,—of the man whose fortune had built the magnificent palace which was to have ruined him without manifesting any symptoms of exhaustion,—was, as may be easily supposed, the most important object of matrimonial speculation in Florence. I have named his personal advantages among his titles to this eminence. But the reader would be misled if he were to conclude thence that any rivalry among Florence belles arising from such considerations, or any love-tale of wooing and winning, has to be told with reference to his marriage. No alliance of the scion of a royal house was ever contemplated and conducted with more exclusive regard to political and far-sighted prudential considerations than that of this leading citizen in the great democracy. And the difficulties the young patrician found in arriving at a conclusion that seemed to him warranted by prudent policy, and the still greater difficulties he had to contend with in acting on his conclusion when he had arrived at it, form a curious *pendant* to the perplexities that beset his father in carrying into effect his wish to spend his own money in building himself a house to his own liking, as a pair of illustrations of the nature of the liberty that existed in free Florence.

Of course, many an overture was made by the heads of the leading families of the then uppermost party; and many a cautious, distant sounding to ascertain whether there was any chance that an overture might be well received. But there came among the rest one proposal which merited very serious and mature consideration. The clergy, either secular or regular, were often the plenipotentiaries who treated such matters between family

and family; and the proposition in question was opened to the widow Selvaggia, who was a very devout woman, by certain friars of the then powerful and influential community of the Dominicans of St. Mark.

When Piero de' Medici was exiled in 1494, his wife Alfonsina, who had been an Orsini, accompanied him into banishment; and when, in 1503, her husband, fighting in the service of France, was drowned in the river Garigliano, she retired to Rome, and placed herself and her two children, Lorenzo and Clarice, under the protection of her husband's brother, Giovanni, Cardinal de' Medici, to whom public opinion was then already assigning the papacy, which he subequently obtained as Leo X.[1] Her daughter Clarice was now of an age to be married; and it was her hand that was proposed to Selvaggia for her son, by a diplomatic Dominican from St. Mark's, acting on the behalf of Alfonsina.

It was a proposition abundantly calculated to startle and perplex Filippo and his mother. The Medici and the Strozzi had time out of mind been more or less overtly at feud. Filippo's father and grandfather had both received notable ill treatment from the members of the powerful family, who had grown from being rival bankers into political oppressors. All the city were of course looking to the marriage of the young Strozzi with the heiress of some notable house of equally anti-Medicean sentiments and politics. Filippo was an important man in the views of his party; and it was expected that his marriage should be made serviceable in consolidating and strengthening party ties. The enmity that would be excited in the city, where now the enemies of the Medici were all-powerful, if Strozzi should make such a match as that proposed would be tremendous,—dangerous even,—

[1] Note 8.

for was there not the law which made it treason to hold communication or treat with exiles? And were not Bernardo del Nero, and other citizens of the highest rank in Florence, only a few years ago[1] summarily decapitated for no other crime than this, at the instigation principally, as was thought, of Savonarola?

Here were considerations of no light importance 'strong against the deed.' But the Dominican negotiator produced the text of the law in question, and pointed out that its provisions were limited to exiles and their *male* descendants. No treaty with an exile's daughter or widow, therefore, could be held to contravene it. The monk then mentioned that the dower to be given with Clarice was[2] six thousand crowns in gold, a sum very notably larger than any usually known in the city in those days. Alfonsina knew, as Lorenzo Strozzi says in his biography,[3] that Selvaggia was, 'as it is usually the nature of women to be, extremely devout, and very eager for money.' And the holy counsels of the Dominican, and the golden bait, had accordingly much influence with her. Indeed, she had need, as her son Lorenzo explains, of ready money; for she had spent large sums of the cash left by her husband in completing the palace according to his wishes; and she was very anxious that her sons, when they came to their majority, should not find themselves short of available ready cash. Another motive that had influence with her in favour of listening to the proposal was, that she knew it would be extremely distasteful to Pietro Soderini, the then Gonfaloniere, who had incurred her enmity by having recently, in a civil cause between her sons and their half-brother Alfonso, thrown the whole weight of his authority into the scale against the former.

[1] In 1497. [2] Note 9. [3] Vita di Filippo Strozzi, p. 13.

But while these more immediate considerations determined Selvaggia to give her support to the proposal, her already cautious son was meditating on the subject with reference to much longer-sighted views and schemes. The ruling party in the city seemed to think that they had got rid of the Medici for ever, and that the present government of the city would be as permanent as at each new constitution it was always intended and declared to be. But Filippo Strozzi did not fool himself with any such anticipations. He thought it by no means improbable that he might see the day when the Medici should be once more in the ascendant. Should he refuse the Medicean heiress now offered to him, and should such a turn of fortune occur, he and his would be infallibly exposed to a persecution which might probably be the total ruin of his house. Again, if no such change should occur, and should the Medici never recover any standing in Florence, still, might not an alliance with them be more advantageous than one with any mere Florentine patrician family? The young schemer meditated on the chances there were that the Cardinal de' Medici might become pope. He thought they were good; and he felt that the nephew-in-lawship to a pope was not a thing to be lightly let slip.

On the other hand, he did not delude himself as to the difficulties that opposed themselves to the step in question. It was true that the text of the law on the subject was clear enough as to the exception of females from the provisions making it criminal to hold communication with the descendants of exiles. But Filippo knew his country and his countrymen too well to trust implicitly to the protection of the law. He knew that, as his brother Lorenzo[1] writes, 'our magistrates, in matters which

[1] Vita di Filippo Strozzi, p. 14.

appear to interest the public weal, proceeded in those days more according to the free judgment of their own minds than according to the written words of the law.' Moreover, he was well aware that the chief of these *free-judging* magistrates, Pietro Soderini, the Gonfaloniere, was his enemy, and would seize the opportunity of exerting all his power and influence to ruin him. Though Filippo, therefore, had made up his mind that the proposed alliance was desirable and advantageous to him, and though it clearly contravened no law of the republic, it yet remained a matter of very serious doubt and consideration with this citizen of 'a truly free state,'—as Lorenzo calls it, remarkably enough, in the same page, in which he records the notable habit of *free judgment* indulged in by its magistrates,—whether or no he should venture to marry according to his wishes.

His brother Lorenzo strongly advised him against any such dangerous and strange step, being, as the biographer writes of himself, naturally inclined to a quiet life, and, moreover, little disposed to forget all the ill turns which his family owed the Medici; but Filippo, urged by his mother, and stimulated by an ambitious inclination to play for the higher stakes, finally determined on accepting the Medicean overture: and the detailed account given by his brother of the carefully-weighed, timid precautions with which he set about the daring deed, and of the consequences that ensued on the perpetration of it, affords a curious and instructive lesson as to the amount of individual liberty enjoyed in the freest of the old Italian republics.

The first step was to despatch a priest as his agent to Rome, to sign in his name the marriage contract. And then, well knowing, says his biographer, the excitement and tumult which would be occasioned in Florence as soon

as the fact should become known, 'and uncertain what the upshot might be,' he thought it more prudent to make sure of his personal safety by absenting himself from the city. So he and his mother went on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Loretto. The latter shortly returned to Florence; but Filippo went to Naples with the intention of remaining there a short time before going to Rome to complete the marriage, in order that it might appear to have been first proposed while he was there, so as to furnish him with an excuse for not having mentioned the matter to the members and friends of the family in Florence. While he was there, however, reports of the marriage found their way to that city; and his brother Alfonso immediately wrote to him, begging him for his authority to contradict such rumours, which, although it was impossible to suppose they had any truth in them, were yet injurious to the family, and ought to be at once put an end to. Filippo would have much preferred putting off, as he had intended, the avowal of his marriage until after the completion of it at Rome; having hoped, as his brother tells us, to make it appear that the thing was an unpremeditated result of juvenile hot blood, conceivēd and done in a hurry, and without reflection. As if Filippo Strozzi had ever done, or would ever do, anything from cradle to grave from uncalculating and hot-blooded impulse!

Finding now by his brother Alfonso's letters that this was no longer possible, and fearing that if he denied the truth of the reports of his engagement, a special decree forbidding him to form any such connection would be issued by the republic (mark this, again, as a trait of the free democratic government), he wrote back avowing the contract he had entered into. The effect of the news in Florence abundantly justified his misgivings. The whole

city was in a commotion at the intelligence. Nothing else was talked of, not only among the patricians and burghers, but by the populace in the streets; and all classes concurred in loudly condemning Filippo. Soderini the Gonfaloniere, especially, thinking that he had now an opportunity of inflicting a deadly blow on the house of Strozzi, and of ingratiating himself with the people by a show of unbending hostility to the Medici by one and the same stroke, was loud in his reprobation of 'such presumptuous licence and audacity in the young man; pointing out that in a well-ordered government such as theirs, it neither could nor ought to be tolerated that private citizens should take such important steps without the consent of the magistrates.' The public voice demanded loudly that such independent boldness should be visited by heavy punishment; and so strong was the general feeling on the subject, that—to quote the notable words of Lorenzo Strozzi—'no one, however different their own opinion might be on the subject, dared to defend him, for fear of being supposed friendly to the Medici, and disaffected towards the existing free and excellent government; so that even his nearest relatives and friends, seeing how strong the stream was running against him, only were anxious to prove their own innocence by asserting, as was true, that they had had no part in, or even knowledge of the matter.'

In these circumstances the supreme tribunal of the 'Priori' issued a summons to Filippo to appear before them; since 'our admirable laws do not permit any man to be condemned unheard.' And this, adds the biographer, suited the views of the Gonfaloniere. For he calculated that Filippo, hearing of the state of opinion in the city, would never venture to trust his person within their power; that he would thus be condemned for con-

tumacy, and sentenced to confiscation of all his property, and perpetual exile.

A courier was immediately despatched to Naples with the citation by Strozzi's family; and Filippo, on receiving it, determined, although there was still plenty of time before the day named for his appearance, to proceed at once to the neighbourhood of Florence, for the purpose of obtaining the means of judging whether he should venture on surrendering to take his trial or not.

As he passed through Rome on his way northwards, he had a secret interview with the Cardinal de' Medici, who was much afraid, we are told, that Filippo would sacrifice his engagement, although the contract had been signed, to appease the storm at Florence. This, however, Filippo assured him that nothing should induce him to do. And he and the cardinal parted well satisfied with each other. Continuing his route northwards, Filippo stopped at a place called Quercia Grossa, within the territory of Sienna, but close to the Florentine frontier. Thence he wrote to the members and friends of his family, saying, that the marriage between him and Clarice de' Medici had been arranged altogether by his mother and the Dominicans of St. Mark; that his own political principles would be found perfectly sound; and that he trusted he should have their support in meeting the accusations brought against him.

The implication of the friars of St. Mark, Savonarola's community it will be remembered, was a very judicious and very important step. The credit and influence they possessed in the city were at that time very great. And as the politic monks felt that, if Strozzi was publicly condemned for having made a marriage which was known to have been negotiated by them, it would have very injuriously affected their reputation, they set themselves

actively to the work of changing the popular feeling on the subject. Wherever the all-engrossing subject was debated, there was sure to be one of these venerated fathers at hand urging, says Lorenzo, 'the sanctity of the holy sacrament of marriage, and the duty of affording protection to young orphan girls;' and, in short, leading men to approve of instead of denouncing the marriage. The powerful effect of these active and ubiquitous advocates was very soon perceptible in the altered tone of the city.

Another cause which also began to operate towards a similar result, is curiously characteristic of Italian habits of thought and action, and of the political life of the old republics. No sooner did the feeling of the city begin to run strongly in favour of backing and encouraging the Gonfaloniere in wreaking his enmity on a rival house, than men began 'to fear lest by that means the greatness of Soderini might become exhorbitant,' as Lorenzo says. And in this tyranny, tempered by universal jealousy and suspicion, that feeling was sufficient to prove a far surer defence of the accused on his trial than his complete innocence according to law.

These concurring influences so effectually modified the state of public opinion, that Strozzi's family ventured to answer his letters from Quercia Grossa, by promising him their aid and countenance, and advising him to surrender himself to the summons on the appointed day. And the intervening time was employed by them in seeking private interviews with the different members of the tribunal who would have to pronounce judgment, and endeavouring to influence them.

Giulio de' Medici, afterwards Clement VII., had accompanied Filippo to Quercia Grossa, sent by the cardinal for the purpose of keeping the young bridegroom steady to his engagements. And in order to obviate all

danger of his being induced by any influences in Florence to break off the match, it was agreed between him and Giulio that it should be asserted that the marriage had been completed some time back, so that it was impossible to break it.

Filippo then went on to a villa called San Gaggio, about half a mile outside the city gate; and was there met by Messer Antonio Strozzi, a doctor of laws, and his cousin, Matteo Strozzi, deputed by the family especially to ascertain whether it could be proved that any one besides Alfonsina, Clarice, his mother Selvaggia, and the Dominican friars had had any share in negotiating the marriage; anybody, in short, who could be shown to be a rebel within the provisions of the laws of proscription. When Filippo had satisfactorily assured them on this point, it was finally arranged that he should, on the day named in the citation, come quietly into the city at nightfall, and at once present himself before the 'Priori.'

He did so accordingly; was admitted to their presence; and on stating simply that he was come as in duty bound, in obedience to a citation from them, which had reached him at Naples, was told that for the present the court had no further orders for him; but upon a further occasion would let him know their pleasure.

Soderini was already beginning to have misgivings as to his power to procure the condemnation he was bent on. And it was no longer with him merely a question of gratifying his enmity, but of supporting his credit. He had committed himself so violently to the loudly-expressed opinion, that it was necessary to the safety of the republic to visit Strozzi's defection from sound republican principles by an exemplary punishment, that he felt that a contrary course adopted by the 'Priori,' of which magistracy he, as Gonfaloniere, was the chief, would be a damaging blow

to his own reputation. It became necessary, therefore, for him in his turn to sound the several members of the court, with a view of ascertaining how the decision was likely to go. And the result of his conferences with his fellow-magistrates was so little reassuring, that he determined on exercising a power which the constitution gave him, of removing the case from their cognizance to that of another court, called the 'Otto di Balia;' not that he was any more certain of being able to obtain from them the decision he wished, but that 'if Filippo were absolved, it would be less injurious to his reputation that the acquittal should be pronounced by another court, and not by that over which he himself presided.'

It is worth noting here,[1] how entirely all idea of the case being judged and decided on its own merits is thrown overboard. The credit of the Gonfaloniere is supposed to rest, not on any pretence even of being an upright judge, but on having influence enough in the city to carry through a condemnation on which he is known to have set his heart. He has no fear that his reputation may suffer from notoriously abusing his high judicial position to serve his private enmities. That is a matter of course. But he dreads the disgrace of its being discovered that he has not power enough to do so successfully.

An accusation accordingly was drawn up, as it was thought at the time, by Macchiavelli, who was an intimate friend of Soderini, and secretly, as the prescribed mode was, after the fashion of the Lion's-mouth denunciations of Venice, presented to 'the Eight.' Filippo was cited before them in consequence, and being called on for his defence made the following speech, as reported by his brother.

'I confess and declare that the marriage in question has in truth been contracted by me. But if I had thought

[1] Note 10.

that it would be displeasing to even the poorest citizen of Florence, much more had I imagined that it could have been complained of before this honourable court, I would have immediately broken off the negotiation.'

It is hardly necessary to point out the gross falsehood of this declaration.

'And if I were yet in such a position that I could retract,' he proceeds, 'I should be ready to justify myself by doing so. But since by the laws of Christianity it is no longer possible to break off the marriage, inasmuch as I have by proxy given Clarice the ring of betrothal, I am obliged to find some other means of justifying myself. And I shall have little difficulty in doing so before judges so upright, and with so good a cause. To enter, then, at once upon the merits of the case, I assert that I have held no correspondence whatever with any rebels; and that those who treated the matter for me placed themselves in communication only with certain Observantine Friars of the Order of St. Dominic, as may be easily proved, since they are still alive, and in this city. And on the part of the lady, only the cardinal her uncle, Messer Giulio, the Prior of Capua, and Madonna Alfonsina, her mother, had any knowledge of the matter. And I have yet to learn that any of these have ever been declared rebels. As for Clarice my wife, although it seems that the law cited in the accusation makes her a rebel, as being the daughter of a rebel; yet, by another law of later date, she has been absolved and liberated in every respect from all penalties. And I have brought the text of this second law with me, that the minds of the court may be well informed and assured that I have in no respect acted in contravention to the laws and regulations of our city.'

Then, having read the law in question, he thus continued:—

'As you hear, Signori, daughters are declared free from all penalties decreed against their fathers for rebellion, and there are not wanting examples of similar marriages contracted in this city without any disturbance or litigation, I have cause therefore to complain of my hard fortune, that I am the first on whom such a marriage should be visited as a crime. And I cannot but wonder exceedingly that any one should have conceived a suspicion of my principles from the notion that I had allied myself with the Medici from disaffection to our present free constitution, or from any desire of restoring their past greatness. All intelligence and judgment must have been perverted in me before I could thus prefer slavery to freedom, danger to safety, and an unceasing condition of grievous disease to real and complete health. Is it supposed that I have forgotten how the Strozzi have always been treated by the Medici, when they were more powerful in Florence than the law? Who does not know that the Strozzi, more than any other Florentine family, were not only deprived of their fair share of public honours by the Medici, but that that family strove by exile, confiscations, and every species of oppression, to ruin and extirpate them? Few of the leading cities of Italy are there that do not contain memorials of these persecutions; especially can Ferrara, Padua, and Mantua vouch for them. In Provence and in Avignon, also, many of our name have been driven to establish themselves from being so exiled: and if I were able or willing to forget the long catalogue of injuries and offences inflicted on my ancestors in old times, is it to be supposed that I could be similarly forgetful of my own? Did not my uncle Matteo, driven from Florence in 1434, finish his life in exile in company with Messer Palla? Was not my father Filippo similarly kept in exile the greater part of his life?

So constant was the hatred of the Medici towards all our house, known as it ever was as the supporter and partisan of free institutions, that it might with truth be said that exile was hereditary in our family, and descended from father to son by entail. Since it would seem, therefore, that such suspicions should light on any man rather than on me, this marriage ought to be especially approved by any citizen who would reason on the subject judiciously. For if there yet lingered in the Medici any unlawful desire to reduce their native city to subjection, better for their purpose would have been any alliance they could find, either here or in any other city, than one with me. For it shall ever be my endeavour, as far as in me lies, to have friends and relations in a position to ask their wishes of me, but never in a condition to command me.

'In conclusion, then, I affirm that I was induced to contract this marriage solely by the reports which reached me of the excellent gifts and qualities of the lady herself. And I declare that I am ready to submit to the most severe punishment that can be inflicted on a turbulent and seditious citizen, if it shall be found that in the negotiation for the marriage, any person, circumstance, or single word had part which could tend to the disturbance of the public tranquillity, or of our present peaceful and sacred constitution. If, on the other hand, it shall seem that my conduct has been without evil intent, and in accordance with the law, I humbly and reverently beg the court, that being a citizen of Florence, I may be judged according to the Florentine laws. For those cities preserve their liberties prosperously and permanently in which the law is more powerful than the influence of private citizens.'

The court, having listened to this defence, took time to consider their judgment, and had several meetings to

deliberate on it. At last their sentence was that Filippo Strozzi should be exiled to Naples for the space of three years, and condemned to a fine of five hundred golden crowns, which, according to the customary scale of augmentation to which all fines imposed by the 'Otto di Balia' were liable, amounted to seven hundred crowns.

The biographer Lorenzo remarks on this entirely arbitrary sentence as follows:—

'Thus Filippo was neither entirely acquitted, nor was he punished to the full extent. On this account the sentence was much approved by such persons as were free from bias on the subject. It seemed to them that Filippo's total ruin, besides being unjust, inasmuch as not according to law, might increase too much the power and pride of the Gonfaloniere; and that, on the other hand, a complete acquittal might injure his reputation and authority too much, and increase those of the Medici, which was not desirable. And although according to the laws on rebellion he was not guilty, it was judged to be by no means inexpedient that the court, seeing that it was invested with full discretionary power, should have drawn a distinction between a marriage contracted with the Medici, who have been wont to enslave their country, and one which might have taken place with any rebel of private condition. The sentence did not much displease Filippo either in his secret heart, although he manifested very different sentiments in public. For he considered that he had got out of a great trouble at a small cost. Especially he felt nearly certain that the upshot was not satisfactory to Pietro Soderini.'

It can hardly be necessary to point out how fatally the principles, so naïvely avowed as regulating the opinions of the Florentines on this occasion, demonstrate their total unfitness for self-government, and strange incapacity of

appreciating the fundamental requisites for civil liberty. Not only does the accused plead,[1] and the judges judge without reference to the laws, but their sentence is canvassed and approved by their fellow-citizens on grounds wholly unconnected with them. The office of the judge is avowed and recognized to consist in a judicious balancing of divers expediences, considerations, and jealousies, among which the principle and sentiment of justice and legality is not only lost in the practice of the courts; but, what is infinitely more fatal, is depraved, and perishes in the minds and hearts of the people.

Filippo immediately paid his fine, and left Florence for his place of banishment. The time allowed him by the terms of the sentence for reporting himself at Naples was sufficient to give him three days at Rome, as he passed through it on his way southwards. And in those days he consummated his marriage with Clarice as quietly and privately as possible.

[1] As I remarked when speaking of this trial in my volume on Cath. de' Medici.

CHAPTER III.

Clarice comes to Florence.—Carries the day against the Gonfaloniere.—Filippo is permitted to return to Florence.—Enmity between Julius II. and Louis XII. of France.—Florence permits a schismatic Council to be held at Pisa,—and is consequently put under interdict by the pope.—Conspiracy of Prinzivalle Stufa.—Public morality in Florence.—Magisterial corruption.—Revenge of Julius II. against Florence.—Sack of Prato.—Anecdotes.—Morality of History.—Gonfaloniere Soderini abdicates.—Filippo Strozzi at Prato.—Politics of revolution in Florence.—Interview between Filippo and the cardinal.—Restoration of the Medici and despotic government.

WITHIN a few months after the departure of Filippo for his place of exile, the excitement in the city which had been caused by his marriage had entirely ceased, and the family thought that they might venture to bring the bride to Florence. She had, it seems, remained at Rome instead of accompanying her husband to Naples, which appears strange; and can only be accounted for by supposing that Filippo had hoped at the time he proceeded to Naples that his wife would soon be able to show herself in Florence.

The friends of the family suspected that the Gonfaloniere would, if he felt himself strong enough, forbid her to enter the city. They took care therefore to ascertain privately that a majority of the 'Priori' would not support him in such a step; and then wrote to the Cardinal de' Medici to send her. She came, accompanied by Giulio de'

Medici and her brother Lorenzo, to a spot within the Siennese territory, where Lorenzo, Filippo's brother, with several other members of the family met her; and then, as Lorenzo says, 'after the fitting ceremonies,' whatever they may have been, the two Medici returned to Rome, while the Strozzi took Clarice with them to Florence, taking care to enter the city at sundown, just before the closing of the gates, 'for the sake of avoiding any concourse or popular demonstration.'

The lady assumed her position as mistress of her husband's house; and immediately beginning to show herself in public and in society, seems at once, Medici as she was, to have made a favourable impression on the Florentines. She was much run after, as being, says her brother-in-law, something new to see. But her modest and dignified manners won all hearts; and men began to say, 'what a shame it was to keep so charming a young woman's husband away from her!' It was exactly that they might do so that Clarice had been brought to Florence, and instructed to exhibit her widowed state to the citizens. And so completely did the plan succeed, that Soderini, despite his hostility, thought it advisable to take the initiative in bringing Filippo back to Florence, for fear of having the mortification of seeing such a measure forced upon him by a majority of the 'Priori.' Clarice had been, in days when matters in Florence were in a very different position, the Gonfaloniere's goddaughter. And he now made that circumstance a pretext for causing it to be indirectly intimated to her, that an application to him for some mitigation of her husband's punishment would be favourably received. The young wife lost no time in obeying the hint. Soderini received her most graciously, promised to use all his influence in Filippo's favour, and, with the consent of the 'Priori,' who were, as he well

knew, desirous of the measure, directed the 'Otto,' who had pronounced the sentence, to call him before them.

Half a year of his exile had not elapsed before Filippo thus found himself once more in Florence, and received permission to remain there for six months. Before that time had passed, it was renewed for another similar period. And thus from half-year to half-year till the whole time of his banishment was over; so that without any formal rescinding of the sentence the effect of it was nullified.

Before the expiration of the three years, while Filippo was thus residing on sufferance in Florence, he had, in 1510, a remarkable opportunity of proving to the Gonfaloniere and the party in power that he had no disloyal feelings towards the existing government.

Julius II., the warrior pope (a Della Rovere, and nephew of Sixtus IV. the Ligurian fisherman's son, who had risen to St. Peter's chair from his Franciscan monk's cell at Savona), had succeeded to the papacy in 1503. This Julius, whom nature had fitted to be a general rather than a priest, had, to certain degree, a sentiment of Italian patriotism. There is no reason to suppose that he had any conception of or sympathy with the rights or wishes of the people, or with free government in any wise, as how should a sixteenth-century sovereign, or a pope of any century have such? But he desired that Italy should be, if not for the Italians, at least for Italian princes. He was the implacable enemy therefore of Louis XII. of France.

Now certain cardinals, who hated Julius with the hatred which cardinals out of favour feel for popes, had suggested to Louis that he had influence with a sufficient number of the Sacred College to get up an opposition council, which, if it failed in absolutely deposing Julius, would at least succeed in causing such a schism in the

Christian world as should at all events be a heavy and disabling blow to him. The most Christian king jumped at the proposal; and it was determined that Pisa was for various reasons the city best adapted for the locality of the proposed schismatic gathering. It was necessary, however, to have the permission of the Florentine government for it to meet there. And this, by the influence of the Gonfaloniere Soderini, who was much swayed in the matter by his brother Francesco Soderini, Cardinal Bishop of Volterra, was obtained. It was, says Lorenzo Strozzi, 'a most pernicious decision, and one not to be remembered without shedding tears.' For Pope Julius, in retaliation for so hostile a measure, was, as the same devout Piagnone writer observes, 'constrained by his honour' to put Florence under an interdict.

But however much it may have been for the pope's honour that the eternal hope of hundreds of poor Florentine citizens should be blasted by dying without their sacraments, Soderini was aware that the city would not long tolerate the privation of them. He therefore ventured on the strong measure of inducing a number of ecclesiastics, partly by persuasion, and partly by violence, to celebrate the divine offices in despite of the papal prohibition, 'to the great contempt and dishonour,' says the scandalized biographer, 'of the apostolic censures.'

Hence intense desire on the part of the passionate and violent pontiff to wreak his vengeance on Soderini; and, as a means to that end, a determination to do everything in his power to assist the Medici in recovering their lost position in the city. And this brings us to the event that gave Filippo Strozzi an opportunity of proving himself, for the present at least, a well-affected citizen.

Pope Giulio and the Cardinal de' Medici were both at Bologna in 1510, and happening to hear that there was

in the city one Prinzivalle della Stufa, a hot-headed young partisan of the Medicean faction, it struck those worthy and reverend seniors that he was the sort of man who might be made a useful tool of. So, having been first sounded by Marc' Antonio Colonna, who was there in the pope's suite, he was with much mystery introduced into the pope's chamber at night. And there a scheme was opened to him for effecting a revolution in Florence, and restoring the Medici to power. The pope was to have an armed force in the neighbourhood ready to march on Florence as soon as Prinzivalle should have assassinated the Gonfaloniere, and thus prepared the way for the coup de main. The poor youth, whose silly head was quite turned by finding himself thus suddenly made a political personage, and the accomplice of a pope and cardinal in a murder, readily undertook all that was proposed, and started at once for Florence to execute his commission.

Filippo Strozzi's marriage with a Medici, and recent banishment in consequence of it, pointed him out, in the estimation of poor hare-brained Prinzivalle, as a sure and safe associate in the business he had in hand. Immediately on his arrival in Florence, therefore, he went straight to the Strozzi palace, and asking for Filippo, begged him to come with him to his father's house, as he had business on which he wished to speak with him. Filippo, marvelling what his business could be, went with him; and when they were both in a private chamber in the house of Luigi della Stufa the young man's father, he went at once to his point, and, as Lorenzo says, 'without any beating about the bush, or feeling his way, as men usually do in such matters,' quietly proposed to Filippo to help him to murder Soderini, and raise the city in favour of the Medici.

Filippo was very unpleasantly startled at the scatter-brained audacity and rashness of such a confidence; but he was not startled out of his habitual cautious prudence. His first thought was that here, in a strange house, it might be dangerous to have heard such a confidence if he were to reject it. He therefore pretended to enter readily into all Prinzivalle's schemes; and after a good deal of talk, made the young man walk back with him to the Strozzi palace. When they had reached Filippo's study door,[1] and the latter had already opened it (for cautious Filippo had no mind to run the risk of a sudden knife-stroke), he quickly turned on Prinzivalle, who was following him, and hurriedly telling him that his plan was by no means to his taste, and advising him immediately to provide for his own safety, shut the door in his face.

Poor Prinzivalle, utterly confounded by this sudden and unexpected change of conduct, cried out to Filippo, imploring him 'at least to behave towards him like a man of honour in the matter.' 'That,' returned Strozzi, 'I shall not fail in. But it is for you to think for yourself, and look out for your own safety.' And to give him time to do so, Filippo deferred till the morning all mention of the matter, even to his brothers and the closest friends of his family. He then told them his strange adventure, and they went together to the Gonfaloniere, and made known to him all the facts.

Gonfaloniere Soderini was not slow to turn the incident to the best account, by making political capital out of it in the Great Council. 'He made,' says the historian Nardi,[2] somewhat sneeringly, 'a long and lamentable

[1] Nardi, Istorie di Firenze, vol. ii. p. 16. Cambi, in the Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani, vol. xxi. p. 244.

[2] Ist. di Firenze, lib. vi. vol. ii. p. 17.

oration,' in which he called on heaven to witness to the purity and patriotism of his administration; and pointed out to them that, however unimportant his own individual life might be, it was against the Great Council itself, and the popular constitution, that the attack was directed. The blow, he said, had been long prepared, and would assuredly be again attempted. And here his words, says good, simple Cambi,[1] who sympathized with him more than shrewd Jacopo Nardi did, were interrupted by sobs. The citizens were moved by his eloquence to decree the arrest of Prinzivalle's father, which was the best they could do, since the culprit himself had taken Strozzi's hint, and escaped from Florence. Some members of the council, who had been most touched by the Gonfaloniere's pathetic appeal, wished to put the old man to the torture. But as there was not the slightest evidence against him, nor even any reason whatever for supposing that he was in any way implicated in his son's crime, the majority contented themselves with banishing him from Florence for five years.

It was, however, no doubt true, as Cambi assures us,[2] that many influential citizens were anxious to return to the government of the Medici, and were ready to conspire for that purpose. They forgot, as that old chronicler, who was a perfect specimen of the Piagnone, or fanatic radical follower of Savonarola, tells us, that 'the liberation of Florence from the tyrant and his satellites came from God, and not by human strength, or the wisdom of the citizens; that the Great Council was established by Him, and ordered by his prophet Fra Gieronimo, who warned us, that whosoever should seek to abolish it should come to a bad end.' And now the judgment did not lag far behind the culprit. It was on the 27th December, 1510,

[1] Deliz. Erud. Tosc. vol. xxi. p. 246. [2] Ibid. p. 248.

that Prinzivalle Stufa's luckless conspiracy was hatched and addled. And lo! that winter, on the 15th of January, sinning Florence was punished by such a fall of snow as had never been known before. It was two feet deep in the streets; and remained there fifteen days. The olives, fig-trees, orange-trees, and vines were destroyed by thousands. 'And men were convinced that this judgment came because justice was not done in Florence, nor the wickedness of the young restrained.'

So corrupt, indeed, continued the historian, had the manners of the time become, that the rising generation no longer, as in the good old time, sought when choosing their wives, virtue, modesty, beauty, or birth, but looked to money solely. So that instead of each rank marrying with its equals only, as in the good old time, any man of low birth, if he had enough money, could ally his daughter with any noble family. Dowers were given of 1500, 2000, and even 3000 florins;[1] and those who could not command these extravagant sums were, to the despair of fathers and mothers, left unmarried. And the consequence was, that there were then in Florence three thousand marriageable girls, for whom no husbands could be found. Immorality naturally increased under such circumstances; and got to such a height, that women of evil life would not be content to live in the part of the city that had been assigned to them, but came and lived in the streets inhabited by the respectable. And what was more pestilential still, groans poor Cambi, they took to wearing the dresses of nuns, and conformed themselves to the manners of decent women, so that they could no longer be recognized for what they were.

Violence, too, was rife in the city to such an extent, that if any citizen went to the magistrates of police to

[1] The florin is a little more than our shilling.

complain, they were likely enough to be stabbed in the streets the next night; or perhaps the magistrates themselves replied to their complaints, by saying, 'It is all very true, but I would fain be able to reach my home o' nights without being murdered when my time of office expires.' And so nothing was done; but, what was worst of all, these same magistrates would attend readily enough to what was asked of them, even if the requests were of the most improper nature, if interest were made with them through the intervention of one of these very women whose scandalous conduct was the cause of so much mischief.

Worthy Cambi has let his zealous indignation run away with him, till he has forgotten that he started by telling us that all the 'judgments' executed and threatened on Florence were provoked by the wickedness of the Florentines, in seeking to change the government; which, he complains, acted thus abominably.

Meanwhile the change in question was about to be effected by what the historian Nardi[1] calls, 'the furious nature of his holiness,' Julius II. That fierce old man, though he had happily at last found it compatible with his honour to remove the interdict from Florence, had not the least intention of forgiving the Gonfaloniere Soderini the affront he had offered him in opening the gates of Pisa to the schismatical council of his enemies. Besides, a turbulent democracy was in the nature of things a far more distasteful neighbour to a pope than a quiet orderly despotism, more especially, too, when the despot was a churchman and a cardinal. So Giovanni de' Medici, who was now shortly to become Leo X., was sent as legate to Bologna, taking with him his brother, Giuliano, his cousin, Giulio, hereafter to be

[1] Vol. ii. p. 10.

Clement VII.; his nephew, Lorenzo, and Raimondo di Cardona, the Neapolitan viceroy, at the head of an army of Spanish troops.

With these foreign soldiers the Medici crossed the Apennine from Bologna, and descended on the little city of Prato, which lies at the foot of them, about twelve miles from Florence.

The unhappy Pratesi had been encouraged to resist, and make themselves thus a bulwark for Florence, by large promises of support and assistance. Three thousand five hundred men were sent, and eighteen thousand others were to have followed them. But on a sudden alarm, that the papal army was about to march directly on Florence, this latter body were detained to protect their own city; and miserable Prato was abandoned to its fate. Even the small body of men and the artillery which were sent, were rendered almost entirely useless by a stratagem executed by a few young men of the Medici party at Florence. Having obtained information that a quantity of powder and ammunition was being despatched to Prato, they rode out of Florence, and posting themselves in a narrow spot of the Prato road, pretended to pick a quarrel with the muleteers, who were conveying the sacks of powder, unprotected, as it should seem, by any escort. Drawing their swords, they cut the sacks and ropes which bound them, put the muleteers to flight, and scattered the powder.

Prato, thus betrayed and abandoned, made but a feeble and ineffectual show of resistance, and was taken by assault on Sunday, the 29th of August, 1512, and given up to be sacked by the pope's troops.

Of this memorable sack of Prato, three several accounts by eye-witnesses, together with illustrative fragments from the records of others of the sufferers, have been printed in

the first volume of the 'Archivio Storico Italiano;'[1] so that we have unusually authentic and detailed information of the horrors that men can inflict, and men and women endure under such circumstances; but it would be far worse than useless to compel the reader to undergo the sickening disgust and horror which the present writer has suffered from the perusal of these hideous and obscene details of torture and butchery. These Spanish troops, as they were called, composed in a great measure of Mahomedan Moors, renegades, and other outcasts and offscourings of Europe, were retained by 'most Catholic,' 'Apostolic,' and paternal rulers in a condition of ignorance, brutality, and demoralization, which turned them into the perfect fiends, now available at the need of Christ's vicegerent on earth for the gratification of his hatred and revenge.

This scene of real horrors, surpassing any that the imagination of the great poet supplied for the furnishing of his infernal 'bolge,' lasted twenty-one days after scarcely as many hours of fighting; and two churchmen, both destined in their turn to sit on Peter's seat, and exercise the universal bishopric of Christian souls, were present and in authority the while. The liberal, jovial, learned, Leo X., father of literature, lover of poets, the admired of three centuries of cultivated mankind, was the highest authority present within that small city, and could hardly have escaped sight, sound, and scent of the deeds going on around him. Indeed, it must be admitted that he did not fail to use his authority for the prompt and exemplary punishment of any deed that struck his feelings as especially deserving of being so singled out from the general business he was there to do. One instance of retribution *is* recorded: one wretch exceeded in his atrocity all that the general licence of the occasion

[1] Published at Florence, 1842. See vol. i. p. 233.

could excuse, or the cardinal's longanimity tolerate. This monster was a Moor, who seized and flung to the ground a consecrated wafer! he was condemned to be instantly burned alive.

The horrible wickedness related to have been done by man on man, during those fearful days, seems to nineteenth-century readers so monstrous and almost incredible, as to induce a comfortable feeling that humanity has left those times so far behind it in its course of progress, as to have become changed in its nature, and quite safe from the possibility of the recurrence of such horrors. But only let men—the leaders and the led—be placed under similar moral circumstances, and the uniformity of the operation of moral law at once asserts itself. The same extent of perversion, an equal depth of brutality, must be expected from the 'flocks' tended by similar pastoral treatment, and from 'shepherds' reared in the same school, and governed by similar passions. Such a scene as the sack of Prato could not be repeated in the nineteenth century, *save* where the same elements still exist which made it possible in the sixteenth. But the tree *will* bring forth fruit after its kind in the moral as surely as in the physical world; and that which a despotic priest did at Prato three hundred years ago, a despotic priest has even now under our eyes repeated at Perugia.

Those of the inhabitants who were fortunate enough to be slain in the first burst of the enemy into the city were about five thousand six hundred; but these were all men: all the women were still left to glut the brutality and cruelty of the victors. There were still all the children to afford sport by their agonies, as they were mutilated before their outraged mothers' eyes. There was still the more serious business of plundering the hapless city to be attended to; and twenty-one days, as has been said, were

thus occupied: 'All those,' says the chronicler Modesti,[1] who had himself passed through that fearful time, 'who remained alive, were made prisoners; men and women, lay and clergy.' The ransoms demanded were in many cases beyond the utmost means of the prisoners; and when the army returned to Romagna, they took with them five hundred prisoners, male and female.[2] Many stories were told, and were traditionally current among the Pratesi for many a year afterwards, of singular and romantic incidents in the adventures of those thus led into captivity. One woman, a cooper's wife, is recorded to have been dragged off by a soldier as his prisoner and slave; and after having continued thus in slavery for seven years, to have at length found an opportunity of putting her captor to death in Parma, whence she returned to her husband in Prato, disguised in the soldier's clothes, riding his horse, and bringing with her jewels and money, which she had found after his death, to the amount of five hundred florins. There are many other passages in which mention is made of female prisoners taken away. When, therefore, the chronicler Modesti,[3] after relating that all the surviving inhabitants were made prisoners, adds, 'It is indeed true, that at the end of twelve days the women were by the command and care of the cardinal brought to his palace and set free, in such a condition as may be imagined,' it is clear that the statement is not intended to include those detained for ransom.

The sad fate of many individuals is specially recorded in the pages of their townsmen who were fellow-sufferers. Among others, we are told of Messer Francesco, the inordinately fat canon of the cathedral, who was cut to pieces and thrown into a caldron to be boiled down to lard!

[1] Archivio Storico Italiano, vol. i. p. 243.
[2] Nardi, Ist. di Firenze, vol. ii. p. 18.
[3] Archiv. Stor. Ital., vol. i. p. 243.

But no part of the misfortunes of their country seems to have left so bitter a feeling in the minds of the chroniclers as the eagerness of the neighbouring cities to profit by their misfortunes. Long strings of carts from Pistoia, Pescia, Empoli, and all the surrounding districts were sent to Prato, to bring away the property of all kinds, which the people of these towns purchased of the soldiers at a tenth part of its value. 'Nor can I pass over in silence,' writes Modesti,[1] 'the inhumanity of the Florentines, who could bear to see passing through their streets, carts laden with the blood-stained clothes and other spoils of their allies, to be sold by public auction in the front of their cathedral, and under their own eyes.'

The men of Prato would doubtless, however, have witnessed the misfortunes of Florence, or of any other of their neighbours with equal indifference. Cities were a long way off from each other in those days; and men's hearts stood proportionably far asunder: they would feel and act differently now. The rail, while increasing physical neighbourhood, has efficaciously preached the duties and sentiments of moral neighbourhood.

But the readers of history are apt to attempt to push their speculations beyond the simple study of the uniform operation of the moral law. They *will* strive to judge *men*, instead of contenting themselves with judging *actions*. Was the sixteenth-century man, they will ask, so much the worse than their own contemporaries? If he merely fashioned his moral nature on the models he had around him—and if the ethical code of each of us be forced on us by the accidents of our environment—is the man unfortunately circumstanced in this respect to be judged as more guilty than his more favourably placed successors? Are we not to 'make allowances?'

[1] Archiv. Stor. Ital., vol. i. p. 245.

A very delicate and difficult question, this matter of allowances; with which, happily, we need not give ourselves the least concern. When the examination of an historical character shows us features that excite our reprobation, the reflection that we probably might under similar circumstances have acted similarly, far from complicating the lessons to be learned from the phenomenon, constitutes in reality the entire value of the study. The specimen of human nature, we observe, which was produced from that soil is detestable. Similar soil would produce more such. Let us therefore *grow* none in such soil. Let us beware of *that* combination of circumstances.

Such surely is the true use and scope of all history; and in nowise any amusement or profit, that could be got out of constituting ourselves a quite superfluous and intensely incompetent grand jury for the finding or ignoring of bills of indictment, to be tried at the last great assize.

The consternation and terror in Florence on hearing the fate of Prato were extreme. When the intelligence that the Spanish army with the Cardinal de' Medici was about moving from Bologna towards Tuscany reached the city, the Florentine government, with Gonfaloniere Soderini at its head, had thought it prudent to imprison all the more notable partisans of the Medicean faction, to the number of forty, and Filippo Strozzi among the number; although nothing save the circumstance of his marriage could give the government any ground for considering him such. He had been warned, his brother tells us, that his name was on the list of those to be arrested; and, that he might have easily avoided it by leaving Florence for a while. But Filippo declined all advice to do so. And it is probable that, foreseeing that the moment for the return of the Medici was approaching,

he was not sorry to be marked by the imprisonment of a few days as one of their adherents.

The arbitrary detention of the forty citizens,—a new proof of the quality of Florentine democratic liberty, did not last long. They were arrested on the 27th of August. But on the night of the 30th the fall of Prato was known, and all was confusion and alarm in Florence. The forty prisoners were set at liberty; and Soderini, who seems clearly to have been a very weak man, was induced to resign his magistracy, and leave the *palazzo publico* secretly.

As soon as he had done so, and the government was thus abandoned, a deputation of citizens was appointed to proceed to the Medici at Prato, and make the best terms they could for the city, and for their return to it. Many friends of the Medici, and some who had been their enemies, but who wished that now to be forgotten, accompanied this deputation, and Filippo Strozzi was of the number of those who did so. The deputation performed their task, and returned. But Filippo, after having formally presented himself to the Medicean brothers, instead of returning to Florence, remained in Prato, 'expecting,' says his brother Lorenzo, 'to hear their ideas and designs respecting public affairs, and intending to speak freely his own mind, and to be of service if he could to his country and to his friends.' But days and days passed, and though he was constantly with the Medici, not a word was spoken by them to indicate their hopes or plans respecting their return to Florence.

Meanwhile their adherents within the city were not idle. New magistrates were being appointed, and the legislative bodies remodelled according to inspirations from the cardinal at Prato, who was thus cautiously paving his way back to the old position of his family.

But in these so frequently recurring revolutions, the fickle city never did things by halves. When once the tide turned, it began to run strongly in opposition to its previous direction. The INS had all to go out, and the OUTS were all to come in. But in bringing about this change, appearances and the semblance of moderation were to be observed as far as was consistent with the objects to be attained. This was the policy of the older, more circumspect, and cautious heads of the faction. Their younger adherents, more impatient, and less prudent, were often inclined to more sudden and violent measures. Thus, upon this occasion, as Cambi[1] tells us in his diary, Antonfrancesco, of the Albizzi family, impatient of the delay occasioned by the intrigues going on between Prato and Florence, went off of his own authority to the former city, and having persuaded Giuliano de' Medici, the cardinal's brother, and Lorenzo his nephew, to return with him, brought them to his own house in Florence, before the sentence of exile under which they lay had been regularly and legally repealed. He had thus, according to the letter of the law, made himself liable to all the pains and penalties fulminated against those who should hold communications with exiles, or in any way compass or plot for their return. It was pretty clear how things were going in the city, and that the young Albizzi risked nothing by his exuberant partisanship and zeal for the winning side. But the members of that great family thought it necessary to call a family meeting, to express their disapprobation and displeasure at the step their kinsman had taken; and they sent two of their members as a deputation to the signory, excusing themselves, and explaining that Antonfrancesco had acted entirely on his own responsibility in the matter.

[1] Cambi, in Delizie degli Erud. Tosc., vol. xxi. p. 311.

But there was no danger. On the second day after their arrival, Giuliano 'ordered of the tailor a magistrate's robe of purple lined with silk, and Lorenzo a black robe and doublet of crimson satin,' and, thus attired, came openly out into the streets; and taking with them a couple of citizens, friends of their family, without any other retinue, waited on the signory, and simply requested that their sentence to exile should be remitted, and that they should be restored to the rights of citizenship, which was put to the vote accordingly, and passed unanimously.

All which might be very well for a simple soldier like Giuliano, and a boy like Lorenzo. But the two priests, the cardinal and his cousin Giulio, wanted a great deal more than this. They wanted to see their way back to sovereignty; and did not choose to enter the city till they had sufficiently prepared matters to make their course clear before them. And Filippo Strozzi, also, still lingered amid the desolate streets and miserable sights of Prato. Filippo was now twenty-two, one year older than his brother-in-law, Lorenzo. But no hot-headed youthful escapade tempted *him*. *He* remained with the long-headed seniors, quietly watching the course of things, and waiting patiently till they should see fit to take him into their confidence.

Not a pleasant residence, one would say, that little city of Prato in the sultry September weather, with between five and six thousand corpses in its wells, a brutal soldiery living at free quarters in its habitations, and deeds of horror and loathing being daily perpetrated in its streets. Yet there remained the politic priests, biding their time; and there remained Filippo,—splendid pleasure-loving Filippo, in that haunt of misery, disgust, and desolation—biding his time also.

Lorenzo Strozzi, his biographer brother,—he at least a

sincere republican, a 'Piagnone'—fanatic, methodistical partisan of Savonarola, that is to say—and consistent hater of the Medici,—Lorenzo assures us that his brother lingered in Prato 'in the hope of being serviceable to his country.' Men think that countries may be served in such very different manners, that it is hard to say of any professing patriot that his country's benefit makes no part of his object.' But we cannot forget that Filippo's marriage, confessedly altogether one of calculation and interest, was contracted precisely with a view to the probability of the events which were now occurring. He had ventured on a difficult and perilous step, which was sure, manage it with all the consummate prudence he would, to injure his reputation with the liberal party in Florence; and it is tolerably clear that he was now intent on securing the advantages he had then played for.

At length, one of those days in Prato, the cardinal sent for Filippo, and asked him as a private friend what was *his* idea as to the best line of conduct for the Medici to pursue towards Florence. To which, writes his brother,[1] Filippo replied, 'that if their object was to return to the city merely as private citizens, as they had often declared, nothing further was needed than to free the city from the dread which was haunting it of falling under despotism; and that this should be done with as little delay as possible. But that if they desired to rule it as they had formerly done, they must make up their minds to bring it to ruin, or to be ruined by it, inasmuch as to keep it subject for long in its present condition was impossible. He added, that the former appeared to him both a cruelty and an infamy, while the latter was neither creditable no profitable.'

[1] Vita, p. xxxi.

The cardinal legate, according to Lorenzo Strozzi's account of the conversation, then asked what security he had that if he laid down his arms he should be safe from the intense hatred which the city had constantly manifested towards them ever since they had been in exile. To which Filippo replied, that his safety would lie in the gratitude and good-will which would result from so glorious an action; inasmuch as all the hatred he spoke of had arisen from the general suspicion and fear of the citizens that they would be again reduced to slavery; a fear that would be entirely removed by the fact of their abstaining from making themselves masters of the city when it was in their power to do so. The legate, we are told, put an end to the conversation by declaring that his family wished nothing more than to enjoy the rights of simple citizenship; but that he did not know if that would suit the plans of his holiness, whose servant and minister he was ever, and in all places: he had no power to depart from the orders which had been given him, but he would communicate with the pope, and await his instructions, praying God the while to inspire his holiness with his wisdom.

Filippo, says his biographer, was but little pleased with the cardinal's words, understanding from them well enough the path he meant to follow. But it will hardly be believed, notwithstanding the honest simplicity of the Piagnone brother, that Filippo needed any enlightenment from the cardinal's words to understand perfectly well what the Medicean intentions were. He neither expected that his platitudes about the gratitude of the city would change the plans of Medicean ambition, nor did the cardinal for a moment suppose that Strozzi was striving so to influence him. The two men were evidently only sounding each other. And the sequel will show that

neither found in the conduct of the other anything which need keep them from acting very closely together.

We hear nothing further of any inspirations vouchsafed to Pope Julius anent the future destinies of Florence. We only find that the cardinal and his cousin Giulio returned to Florence on the 14th of September, entering the city, as Cambi [1] records, 'not with processions and guilds of the citizens as was customary, being, as he was, the pope's legate for Tuscany, but with an escort of men-at-arms, and a retinue of Bolognese infantry,'—and that on the following day the *palazzo publico* was quietly and gradually filled with armed men, the great council dissolved and abolished, and the supreme power lodged in the hands of a small board composed of creatures of the Medici.

[1] Cambi, p. 323.

CHAPTER IV.

Liberty in Florence.—Filippo at home.—The loaves and fishes.—Terrorism in Florence.—Conspiracy of Capponi and Boscoli.—Luca della Robbia's narrative.—A night in a Florentine condemned cell.—Amateur theology.—A last shriving.—A confessor from St. Mark's.—Father Cyprian's opinion of conspiracy.—Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici's journey to Rome.

THUS once again, after an exile of eighteen years, the fatal Medici were restored to Florence; once again fixed their fangs in the prey they had been scared away from; and 'the most democratical democracy in Europe' was once again muzzled and chained. A conspiracy of priest and soldier—detestable and ominous combination, more baleful to humanity than any other of the poisonous mischiefs compounded out of its evil passions and blind stupidities—had as usual trampled out the hopes and possibilities of social civilization and progress. Not that democratic Florence had advanced much towards the discovery of any true principles of liberty. We have seen the citizens, when left to their own guidance, had but very imperfect notions on that subject; we have seen that, for want of any real reverence for human opinion, which is a virtue hardly to be attained to by a people trained in and moulded by the Catholic religion, a free state was, according to their ideas, one in which a large number of its members was permitted to share in the luxury of tyrannizing; and we have been forced to the conclusion that,

in fact, real individual liberty of action and development, which can only be assured by a philosophical intelligence of the due limits to the right society has to constrain individual will, was nearly as much unknown to them in their intervals of republicanism as under their tyrants. All this is true. But in the former condition their social system was plastic, in the latter it was rigid. In the one case there were movement, change, competition, collision of mind, life, and therefore the assured hope of progress and development. In the other there were fixedness, stagnation, absence of hope, the impossibility of development, and progress deathwards only. Under one set of circumstances the liquor was in a state of fermentation, and would have worked itself clear. Under the other, it was stagnant, and hastened towards decay and putridity.

On the day when the 'coup d'état' was performed, as has been indicated in the last chapter, at the *Palazzo Publico*, the citizens were of course thronging the streets and great square in large numbers. But Filippo Strozzi 'happened,' as his biographer says, to be at home in his palace just then. He was quite uneasy too, we are told, at hearing the tumult there was in the city, not having any idea what could be the matter; since, not being in the confidence of the Medici, no hint had been given to him of what was in the wind. Surely our biographer brother —the Piagnone methodist body, an honest republican and consistent hater of the Medici, he, at all events—forgets that talk at Prato a day or two ago. The cardinal legate's pious ambiguities upon that occasion, and hopes that God would inspire into the mind of his master the pope wise thoughts anent the future fate of Florence, had, we thought, left our shrewd Filippo, who knew as well as most men the value of such palaver in a cardinal's mouth,

very sufficiently well informed of the programme of coming events. But now, just at the very moment when the chestnuts are being pulled out of the fire, amid much shrieking and disturbance of those concerned in the operation, shrewd Filippo takes good care that his paws shall be burned in no such job, and will content himself with asking the monkeys if he can be of any service to them when they have got the desired fruits into their possession.

What prudence in a youth of two-and-twenty!

'But as soon,' writes good Lorenzo, 'as he heard what had happened, that he might not increase the suspicion in which he saw that he was held, he sent a message to Giulio de' Medici, with whom he was better acquainted than with the legate or his brother Giuliano, to ask what it was wished that he should do. And he received orders to present himself in the great square armed.'

To appear in arms on the scene of the turning out of the Great Council,—the visible consummation of the destruction of the popular government and the inauguration of tyranny! This was just what Filippo Strozzi wished to avoid doing. The man who had married a Medici when they were out, because he reflected that a time might very likely come when they would be in, was not one to forget that they might be out once again, and a reckoning be demanded for the work done that day. Still, reflecting that arms might possibly be useful, though the appearance of them was undesirable, and that it was better to comply in some sort with the directions sent him, he determined to carry secret arms. Arrived in the 'piazza,' he placed himself beside Giulio de' Medici, and remained till the names of the sixty, in whose hands the semblance of the supreme authority was now to be lodged, were read out. There was not one Strozzi among the number;

which proved to him, says brother Lorenzo simply, that the Strozzi were as much held in suspicion as ever by the Medici. Within the same page he goes on to relate what shows, as we shall see, that such was not the case. And Filippo was not the shrewd man we take him for if he either drew any such conclusion from the absence of his name, or desired it otherwise.

But it gave him[1] an opportunity of making a little political capital out of the circumstance in this wise. Returning home, he met near his own door on the 'Piazza dei Strozzi,' one Piero di Gianozzo, a member of the family, and friend, who burst out in a passion:—

'So your Medici connections, with this board of theirs, show us plainly enough that they pay no attention to our alliance with them, and if it depended on me, I would send your wife Clarice back to them.'

'Do you not know, Pietro,' quoth our shrewd Filippo, with philosophic calm, 'that this care for those who have cared for them is the price of our public liberty, which has been sold? And as I was not one of the sellers, it was not to be expected that I should receive part of the price. And I would rather, after the old fashion of our family, be slighted thus honourably, than put myself in the way of advancement by different means.'

Such a prudent and virtuous youth of two-and-twenty was our Filippo!

And when, very shortly, a place was offered him, he declined it. It was only offered to him, according to his brother's account, for the sake of making a convenience of him. The thing fell out thus: that Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, who brought, as we have seen, Giuliano de' Medici to Florence, was excessively anxious to become a member of the government; but he was,

[1] Vita, p. xxxiii.

according to the regulations, too young for office. Still, after his notable services to their cause, the Medici were unwilling to disappoint him, and caused a dispensation to be made on this point in his favour. As it was thought, however, that this could be done more decently if the measure were to appear to be adopted, not for him solely, but for some other as well, it was proposed to Filippo to accept a seat at the board, to which it was intended to appoint young Albizzi; but the prudent youth excused himself 'with regrets that his mind and judgment had not, like that of some others, become mature before the due time.'

Still Strozzi by no means held aloof from the Medici. On the contrary, we are told that he assiduously frequented their court, more especially associating with Giulio, who was afterwards Clement VII. Nor was it long before he found the means of turning his connection with the Medici to account, and partaking in the advantages of their rising fortunes without exposing himself to awkward recollections hereafter in case of one more revolution in Florence, by having held office there under the tyrants. And in truth, Filippo did show his wisdom in refusing place under the Medici during the early months of their restoration. The precariousness and difficulty of their government, and the mutual suspicion and alarm which existed between it and the people, are well described by the historian Nardi.[1] The mere fact of three or four citizens being observed talking and laughing together by one of the government spies, was sufficient to mark them out for suspicion: and the same historian relates an anecdote of Filippo, which shows, that though holding no recognized office, he had much more influence in the early months of the restoration than

[1] Istorie di Firenze, vol. ii. p. 24.

his brother, the Piagnone, would have us believe. For once, when discoursing with a friend on public matters, and the aspect of parties in the city since the return of the Medici, on the latter observing that it could not be denied that Strozzi had more power in Florence than ever he had had, but that such power was of little worth in that it depended altogether on the will of others, it was observed that Filippo made no attempt to deny either proposition.

At no former period of their usurped power were the Medici more odious to the mass of their fellow-citizens than they deservedly were after this last restoration at the hands of foreign soldiers, and by such means as we have seen at Prato. And the general feeling was exhibited in a conspiracy of which a very singular and interesting memorial has been preserved to us in the record of one who passed the last night in the condemned cell with one of those who suffered for it. This chronicler was Luca della Robbia, the great-nephew of the celebrated artist of the same name; and his account of the last hours of his condemned friend affords, from its detailed minuteness and naïve simplicity, a wonderfully life-like photograph of a strange and characteristic passage of mediæval life.

This precious little bit of history remained in MS. till 1840, when it was printed in a little annual at Leghorn; and again in 1842, more worthily in the first volume of the 'Archivio Storico Italiana,' of which it occupies but twenty-seven pages. It had, nevertheless, long been not only known, but popular; and, as Signor Polidori, the accomplished editor of the volume in question, remarks, the MS. copies circulated from hand to hand embellished by marks of the tears of successive generations of pitying women of all classes and parties.

A very few days before the death of Julius II., which occurred on the 20th of February, 1513, one Bernardino Coccio, of Siena, paying a visit in the house of the Lenzi, who were related to Soderini, the ousted Gonfaloniere, found on the ground a paper containing the names of some eighteen or twenty young men, with enough of the written scheme of a plot to indicate that they were conspiring against the lives of the Medici. How many similar fatal discoveries have been made in the same manner! One might imagine that when men have catalogues of names which may consign every individual figuring among them to the scaffold, they always drop them out of their pockets.

The finder of this fatal paper forthwith took his information to the government, and obtained the mastership of a hospital at the little town of San Gemigniano for his pains. All those whose names appeared in the fatal list (and among them one Niccolò Machiavelli, of whom the world heard more afterwards) were examined under torture: several were condemned to perpetual imprisonment in the dungeons of Volterra, and two were condemned to death—Agostino Capponi, and Pietro Paolo Boscoli, who was himself the careless loser of the fatal paper.

The task of examining these unfortunate men, of submitting them to the torture, and of sentencing two of them to death, fell to the lot of that board of eight—the Otto—a seat at which Filippo Strozzi had so recently declined. He must now surely have applauded himself for his resolution.

Luca, the author of the record that has been mentioned, had been an intimate friend of Boscoli, and went to spend the last night with him in prison, remaining there, he writes, from about eight P.M. till the moment of his death,

which was about four A.M. It was near the former hour that Boscoli, after having supped, was brought into the chapel with fetters on his legs, and there told he was to die. The 'Neri' were there waiting for him—a confraternity so called from the long black gowns they wore, with hoods wholly concealing their faces, whose self-imposed duty it was to attend on and comfort culprits condemned to die, during their last night. Anything less comforting, at least in appearance, than these hideously masked figures, which may yet be seen engaged in various acts of mercy in the streets of Florence, can hardly be conceived. 'The official did his duty,' writes Luca, 'brutally enough;' and the condemned man exclaimed, 'Oh, Pietro Pagolo![1] Pietro Pagolo! to what a point art thou brought!' 'Thereupon,' continues Luca, 'being moved with the utmost compassion at seeing my beloved friend in this agony, I advanced towards him as affectionately as I could, and saluted him, saying, "God save thee, my dearest friend! Noli timere eos, etc.,—Fear not them which can kill the body only, but cannot kill the soul." And he, as though he did not hear me, made no answer, but said, "I would fain see Father Zanobi Acciaiuoli; for I begged the *Otto*, that if I were condemned to death, I might remain with my confessor four hours; and it was promised to me. See that this be obtained for me." Shortly some one came with word that Father Zanobi Acciaiuoli was not at Florence, but at Rome. Then he said, "Let me have some one from that convent,[2] for I have need of a learned and good man!"

'Said I, "Doubt not that you shall be consoled."

[1] Popular Florentine for Paolo, Paul.

[2] St. Mark's, which the reader will recollect was Savonarola's convent.

And he rejoined, "I have but little time; and I am overcharged with food. I have supped on salt meat, so that it seems impossible for me to raise my soul to God." And again he exclaimed suddenly, "God have mercy upon me! for those fellows have laden me with victuals. How very wrong! If they had told me before supper that I was to die, I would have taken a little refreshment, and that would have sufficed." Then came in Agostino Capponi, he, too, with fetters on his limbs; and seeing his fellow-prisoner thus cast down, he said, "What, Pietro Pagolo! are you not willing to die? What is the matter with you?"

'And he replied, "Oh, Agostino, I die willingly; but there are two things that afflict me. One is, that Anton Serristori and Piero Ridolfi this morning held out to me hopes of life; and, I know not why, but I clung to it somehow eagerly. And the other is, that these fellows have given me too much supper. How can I turn my heart to God!"

'And Agostino answered, "Never fear! Let us at all events die without shrinking!"'

Perhaps Agostino had a stronger digestion than poor Pietro Pagolo. The salt meat of the Bargello supper did not lie so heavily on his stomach, and he could therefore show more heroism. He did not feel so disagreeably that the 'corpus onustum, amimum quoque prægravat una, atque affligit humo divinam particulam auræ.' But it is curious to note how this young Christian of the 'ages of faith,' who was no rough unlettered soldier, but, as we learn from the accounts preserved of him, a highly-educated man of literary tastes and pursuits, could not, even in his most elevated view of his spiritual needs in that supreme hour, conceive otherwise of his eternal hopes, than as depending, according to certain well-defined con-

ditions duly laid down, on the proper use of the few minutes that remained to him. It was not sufficient, according to his views, to recite words by rote, and comply with sacramental ceremonies. He must raise his heart to God!—an immense advance in spiritual theory, you will say. But still all depended on the *opus operatum* then and there to be performed, the accomplishment of which was unluckily rendered so arduous by the untoward accident of the salt-meat supper, that the turnkey's neglect in not having earlier warned him he was to die that night might, it was to be feared, have the effect of consigning his soul to eternal perdition. The conception, that the conditions of his future existence must depend on his own spiritual capabilities, as resulting from, and forming the net moral produce of his *whole* life here, was almost as distant from him as from any woodland worshipper of Mumbo Jumbo.

Good, kindly Luca does his best to smooth the difficulty and comfort his unfortunate friend; but his efforts are somewhat of the jejunest, and the texts with which he plies the patient at intervals during the night, as a good nurse fails not to administer the prescribed potion every half-hour to her dying charge, are of the tritest, seasoned with the flattest platitudes. But it is a difficult task to make death acceptable to the healthy strength and vigorous pulses of eight-and-twenty, which was the age of poor Boscoli; and the sympathizing look from friendly Luca's eye, and the kindly pressure of his hand, was no doubt worth more to the condemned man than his repertory of texts.

"'You see how it is with me, Luke," said he. "Yes, my dear friend," said I; and I added, "I have long been persuaded, Pietro Pagolo, of the truth of a proposition which, if you also could entirely believe it, would, I doubt

not, enable you to make this step, great as it is, without difficulty. And this it is, that not the leaf of a tree falls to the ground without the will of God." "Of a surety I believe it," replied the condemned man, not profiting, it would seem, to the full extent of good Luca's anticipations from the application of his original nostrum; "but see, Luca, that I have this confessor, for the time is very short, and I have a heavy budget. It is true that I have no restitutions of goods to make to any man." "That," said I, "is a capital thing!" And he rejoined, "Oh, Luca! I have always been ungrateful to God, and have offended Him in all sorts of ways; but I place my hope in his mercy." "That," said I, "is the important point. *Quare igitur tristis est anima tua? . . . . etc., etc.*" '

But again the poor fellow, like the sick man asking with querulous but clinging faith for the doctor, said, '"Luke, is this confessor coming?" I answered; "Yes; but you must understand that I am far from sure whether you can have a friar of St. Mark's. For you know that they are very much suspected by the government; and I doubt whether any one of them would venture to come here. Is there no one you would like in the abbey?"[1] And he said, "Who is there there?" "There is the Abbot, Don Giovanni Batista Sacchetti," said I, "and one or two others, who are thought to be good confessors." Upon this he said, "I have need of one that can move my heart for me. Try if I can have one from yonder."[2] And just as he said these words, Stefano the painter happened to come in, and offered to go to

[1] The Badia. A convent so popularly called, very near the Bargello.

[2] *i. e.*, from St. Mark's. It is curious to observe that the great radical monk had left among his flock of Dominicans at St. Mark's the reputation of being pastors who 'could move the heart.'

St. Mark's, and see if he could be contented. Some one else just then came in, and said, there is Messer Jacopo Manegli here; the prisoner can take him for confessor. But Pietro Pagolo cried with a loud and free voice, "I'll none of Messer Jacopo!" And turning to Stefano, he said, "Go then to St. Mark's, and bring that friar from Lucca." For he did not know his name, as he was not called by it in the convent. And I added, "If you can't get him, take Fra Serafino,"—a friar in my opinion of a disposition very similar to that of Boscoli. Just then, turning himself to those who were standing around, he said, "I pray you not to distract my attention so, all of you;"—for they kept coming to speak to him, first one and then another;—"Luca here is sufficient. He knows my disposition. If I want anything, I can tell him. All you others, pray to God for me."'

It would seem from the above, and some other passages of this very curious record of the 'dernière nuit' of a Tuscan 'condamné' of the sixteenth century, that anybody who pleased lounged into the Bargello at any hour of the night, to amuse himself with a chat with or a look at the man who was to die the next morning. It seems almost incredible that such should have been the case; yet again a little further on, we find the prisoner piteously begging that no more people shall be let to come in, 'for I have no need to have my attention distracted.' So Luca promises him that no more people shall be let in.

'Then he began to speak to me of his mother, saying, "Who will comfort her in this so terrible tribulation? Poor soul! Her share of sorrow is a heavy one!" I said, "Pietro Pagolo, I have already spoken with her." "Have you though, really?" said he. "I have been to her," I replied, "every day since last Sunday; and though her

heart is bleeding, her reason has been supported by God."'

Then he fell to speaking of the examination he had gone through before the magistrates, and feared that what he had said might injure others of the party. He feared he had been the death of Niccolò Valori; and charged Luca to tell Ser Zanobi, who was one of the *Otto*, to erase from his examinations certain words which he retracted. This was done, and had very probably the effect of changing for Valori a sentence of death into that of perpetual imprisonment, which was pronounced on him. After speaking for a while on these matters, the young republican cried suddenly, '"Oh, Luca! help me to clear my head of Brutus, so that I may be able to make a Christian end!" Said I, "That is an easy matter enough if you choose to die a Christian. Besides, you know that all these Roman stories are not written in their simple truth, but are artistically heightened in effect." "And if they were all true," rejoined he, "what would they signify to me; since those deeds were not directed to the true object." "My intellect," he goes on to say after some more very trite preaching from the worthy Luca, "my intellect believes the Faith, and wills to die a Christian death, but it seems to me as if it were subjected to force; and it appears to me as if my heart were hard. I don't know if I am able to explain my meaning." "I understand," said I; "you would fain feel a sweet affection for God, accompanied by tears and groans, and that your intellect should yield its spontaneous assent to the Faith." Then said he, "Yes! that is it." Said I, "Pietro Pagolo, the first of these things is desirable; but the second is not necessary to salvation. It is meritorious in you to force your intellect, and submit it to the Faith, though I think that presently it will not seem to you to

require forcing. And you will obtain tears too, because you have several aids to look to, such as confession, the communion, indulgences, and the prayer of the bystanders. Never fear." Then one of those near said, "Give him the *tavoluccia*."[1] But he said, "There is no need of the *tavoluccia*. I should be in a bad way if I could not recognize our Saviour without the *tavoluccia*."'

After some further talk, in which the wandering of the condemned man's mind backward and forwards from his religious meditations to little trivialities of the world's matters is accurately written down by the conscientious Luca, and affords an interesting physiological study, he cries out again :—

'"Luca, Luca, this victual prevents me from uniting my heart to God, as I fain would do; and it seems to me, too, that my heart is hard; and a thousand fantasies throng my mind; and the confessor seems to me a thousand years in coming."' Then, after another Latin text or two from Messer Luca, he says, '"If it is enough to have a yearning desire to please God, and to feel grief for my sins, this I have. But I don't feel that certain tenderness that I could wish." To which I said, "That wish is sufficient; tenderness is not necessary, nor tears; though I hope that you will have them. . . . Shall we say a psalm?" He answered, "Luca, I can say nothing but paternosters and ave-marias." And I rejoined, "That is the best prayer a man can say. Say a paternoster to yourself, if you like."'

That was done accordingly as recommended; and then, in reply to further exhortations from Luca to hold the Faith, he says, '"Read me the creed of St. Athanasius." And when I had found it, he said it would be

[1] This is the popular name of a painting on wood of the Crucifixion, used on similar occasions as a tool for exciting contrition.

better to read it himself; and so, taking the book into his fettered hands, he read about twelve verses with such unction that he drew tears from those standing around. Then he said, "That's enough!" as indeed one might suppose it to be.

But though it may be true that the feat of drawing tears from an audience by reading the first twelve verses of the Athanasian creed can be paralleled only by that of the consummate master of intonation, who undertook to make his hearers weep by the mere utterance of the word 'Mesopotamia;' and though the circumstance indicates that both poor Pietro Pagolo and his hearers considered the words recited only as certain holy incantations, which might have the virtue to help him at his present urgent need, and were touched by the earnestness with which, in the extremity of his trouble, he strove to extract comfort from the sound of the charm—yet it is very curious and interesting to observe throughout the recorded conversations of that night, the difference of the tone of thought on spiritual matters, which the different position of the condemned man and his friend had produced in them. Luca della Robbia evidently was the more educated and better read, and probably the stronger-minded man of the two. He was most sincerely anxious also to do all that in him lay to console and strengthen his unfortunate friend. He has a very pretty talent too, for an amateur, at clinical theology. But his cut-and-dry topics, his Latin texts, his extensive knowledge of reported cases as bearing upon the question of what is 'necessary' and what is 'not necessary, but only desirable' for salvation, and his brisk and adroit handling of his theological instruments, break down sadly when brought into collision with the real earnestness of the poor patient's solemn position. Shooting athwart importunate reminiscences of trivial

circumstances, and babble about what had happened on such a day between him and Luca, come fitful gleams of the real truth of the matter. Though he knows no prayer save a mechanical 'paternoster' or 'ave-maria,' he breaks off his Athanasian creed-reading to cry, 'Luke, Luke! tell all our friends, that the habits contracted by them during life are those which stick to them in death.' Though assured that it is all contrary to rule, he cannot help feeling that the condition of his heart is of more consequence than 'forcing his intellect' to hold 'the faith.' And though he attributes, poor fellow, his distaste for thoughts of spiritual matters to indigestion, he feels that unchanged admiration of the blow which Brutus struck is the true obstacle to Christian sentiments in his heart of hearts.

At last the confessor arrives. It is friar Cyprian of Pont'-a-Sieve, from St. Mark's. 'And poor Pietro Pagolo,' says worthy Luca, 'could not have a better.' He knew him to be learned, zealous, active, practical, very kindly, and a thorough master of his business. Luca drew the monk aside a moment and whispered to him, 'Fra Cyprian, it is a speculative mind you have got to deal with here. He is a well-educated youth, and my special friend. I recommended him to you most earnestly; and he has been very anxiously waiting for you.' Said friar Cyprian, 'Does he hold the faith?' 'For,' explains Luca, 'a false report had already got abroad that he was a misbeliever.'

(So we find, surprisingly enough, that the ingenious plan of crying out, *atheist!* when any disaffected subject, radical reformer, or other such obnoxious person has to be run down, is an invention three hundred years old and more.)

'I answered,' continues Luca, 'be very sure that he

believes as he ought. Just you wait till you get to work with him; *che siete alle mani seco.* He will astonish you by his resoluteness of faith, and firmness as regards the death before him. It is true that he is aware he requires assistance. He will tell you his difficulties, and I pray God that you may comfort him. But before you go to him, I want to be told whether, as I have heard, for I never read it myself, St. Thomas[1] says these conspiracies are unlawful. And Cyprian answered that sure enough St. Thomas did say so. '"Well-a-day!" said I, "you had better tell him so, for fear he might perchance be mistaken on this point."'

So the confessor went in to do his office. 'And just then the Compagnia dei Neri (the black-gowned and black-masked fraternity mentioned before, whose vows oblige them to attend culprits on the night of their execution) began to sing the penitential psalms. Whereupon Pietro Pagolo cried out very sharply, "Brothers, I don't want that noise in my ears, for it is very disagreeable to me. I have but a short time, and pray content yourselves with keeping quiet, that I may confess myself in peace. For this singing of yours is of no assistance to me at all. If you would pray to God quietly for me to yourselves, I should be grateful to you." And Father Cyprian added, "Yes! say it each of you to yourselves. It will come to the same thing; and won't interrupt us."

'While confessing, he called to me several times; and once he said, "Luke, when I was a lad, I vowed to go on foot to Santa Maria Impruneta;[2] and I have never performed my vow. I beg of you to undertake this obligation for me. I impose it on you *jure amicitiæ.*' And I said, "By the same I undertake it."'

[1] Aquinas, of course.

[2] A celebrated shrine, on a high hill seven miles from Florence.

Then the absolution is given; and the confessor and Luca cease not to pour in exhortations, and scraps of Latin text, till the fatal moment has arrived. The black brethren hoist their banner, painted with the Crucifixion, and precede the prisoner down the stairs into the court—those same picturesque old stairs in the angle of the Bargello, that so many a dying man's foot has trodden in the good old time, and so many an artist's hand depicted in the degenerate modern time; and the deed is done on a block in the centre of the court-yard. Some months afterwards Luca met Father Cyprian at Prato, not having seen him in the interval, and took the opportunity of asking the confessor's opinion of the state of his poor friend's soul. The answer of Father Cyprian, the monk of St. Mark's, is remarkable, as an indication of the political sentiments which Savonarola had bequeathed to that community.

It will be remembered that Boscoli and his companion were executed for having conspired to assassinate Giovanni, Giuliano, Giulio, and Lorenzo de' Medici, who had recently succeeded in once again destroying the republican form of government in Florence.

Said Father Cyprian, 'I believe firmly that he is among the blest, and that he has not gone through any purgatory. And to confess to you my own opinion (but, said he, these are not things to be repeated; for then men would say, "These friars always manage these affairs according to their own prejudices;" but to you I will tell it, only keep it to yourself), I believe that he died a martyr, without any doubt about the matter. For I found such an excellent and determined intention in him, that I was astounded. Be very sure, Luca, that there are few like him. He was a youth of great courage, and of the best intentions. And as to that point on which you spoke to

me that night, respecting the unlawfulness of conspiracies, you must know that St. Thomas makes this distinction: either a nation has put a tyrant over itself, or the tyrant has seized the government by force, suddenly, and against the will of the people. In the first case it is not lawful to conspire against the tyrant. In the second case it is a virtue.'

And with this statement of the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas respecting regicide, this very singular document concludes.

Pope Julius II. died in the night of the 20th of February, 1513. And the execution above described took place on that of the 22nd. So that, allowing for the time required for the news of the pope's death to reach Florence, Giovanni de' Medici had just about time to see these youths' heads off before starting for Rome to take his share with the other cardinals in the election of a new pope. Of course this must depend on the answer vouchsafed to the prayers of the cardinals, that their choice might be directed by the Holy Spirit to select the fittest father of the universal Church of Christ. It was very generally believed, however, that the Holy Spirit would hardly fail under the circumstances to indicate Giovanni de' Medici as the best man. And this turned out to be the case, as the world has since been more than sufficiently aware.

The cardinal was accompanied on his hurried journey to Rome by Filippo Strozzi. What on earth could a grave churchman going on such a mission want of such a companion as the gay, handsome, pleasure-seeking young banker? Some silver-haired and venerable confessor, who should have beguiled the way by his exhortations as to the awful nature of the responsibility the cardinal was about to assume, and dwelt on all the importance of the

election; such a one, it might have been supposed, would be the companion of a dignified priest bound on such an errand. But a dissipated young banker!

Yet the young banker's brother, strict Piagnone, and disciple of austere Savonarola as he was, tells us as simply as if it was the most ordinary business in the world what Filippo went to Rome for with the cardinal. Inasmuch as the latter 'aspired, not without good reason, to the papacy, it was likely enough that he might have to avail himself of Filippo's credit.'[1]

So that it seems to have been quite as much a recognized thing, even among the strictest, in those admirable 'ages of faith,' that a candidate for heaven's vicegerency should come up to Rome with his banker to support him, as that in our days a candidate should seek similar aid in presenting himself to a select borough constituency.

[1] Vita, p. xxxiv.

CHAPTER V.

The pope's banker.—Lorenzo de' Medici.—Intimacy of Strozzi with him.—Strozzi's simplicity of manner.—Refuses a territorial title.—Filippo as 'festaiuolo.'—Journey with Lorenzo to France.—Festival at Amboise.—His feelings on the occasion of Lorenzo's death.—Filippo's moral character.—His literary tastes.—His family.—Lorenzo's death-bed.

AND thus, by the combined operation as it should seem (for this occasion only) of heavenly influences with those of Mammon, Leo X. came forth from the conclave.

But what, it may be asked, was the motive which induced prudent Filippo Strozzi to give his uncle-in-law all the support that a favoured votary of Mammon could supply on this great occasion? The motive was made clear enough on the elevation of Leo to the papal throne. Filippo was declared treasurer of the apostolic chamber; a place, as his brother hastens to assure us, both honourable and lucrative. Being the latter, it was of course deemed to be the former; and Leo immediately conferred it on his nephew-in-law, as Lorenzo Strozzi writes, 'Both as a recognition of the family connection between them, and in order to avail himself hereafter of Filippo's cash and credit at need.'

The arrangement was thus satisfactory to all parties. Filippo began at length to reap some fruit from the far-sighted prudence which had induced him to marry the daughter of the exiled family; and made up his mind to

settle himself in Rome, not only to superintend the large financial operations arising from his new office, but with the intention of engaging in extensive mercantile transactions.

The course of the Medicean fortunes, however, with which Strozzi was henceforward inextricably bound up, compelled him in part to modify these plans. For Leo's brother, Giuliano, very soon found that he too was drawn to Rome in the wake of the family fortunes at this their high tide. And cousin Giulio, having been created a cardinal in September of that same year, 1513, he was also naturally attracted to the same fountain-head of honours and profit. And thus there remained only the youth Lorenzo to be left at the head of affairs in Florence. He was one year younger than Filippo Strozzi, having been born in 1492; and was thus only twenty-one at the time of his uncle's elevation to the papacy. Clarice was, as the reader will remember, Lorenzo's sister. And the two young brothers-in-law, so nearly of an age, fell into a degree of intimacy, which made Lorenzo, when left by the absence of his elders in the possession of sovereignty, or quasi-sovereignty, extremely desirous of having Filippo near him. So Strozzi had to abandon for the present his mercantile plans, leave the business of his new office to be transacted by the managers of his bank in Rome, and return to Florence, to become the inseparable companion and favourite of Lorenzo.

The position was not a creditable one for the head of the old anti-Medicean house of Strozzi; and Lorenzo Strozzi, the biographer, seems to have felt that it was not so. But he has no conception of its being any part of the duty of a family chronicler to admit that a Strozzi could act ill, especially that Filippo, his great hero, could have put himself in an undignified and discreditable

position; and he strives hard to make out that he could not avoid it; that he could not avoid it without risking dangerous enmities and loss of profit, that is; for the biographer, all Piagnone and austere disciple of Savonarola as he was, thinks, that he has made out an abundantly sufficient case in favour of adopting a line of conduct otherwise objectionable, if it be shown that 'prudence' required it, and that a contrary course might entail loss of substance.

It was not only that the head of the old republican house, which had during so many generations opposed itself to Medicean usurpation, and suffered so much in consequence of its consistent opposition, should sink into becoming the courtier of a Medicean court; but this young Lorenzo was in nowise a creditable companion, friend, or patron for any man. Leo, his uncle, who was very far indeed from being one likely to judge a young man's—and especially a young prince's—faults severely, or to expect any very high-toned morality, used to say, we are told,[1] that it would have been well for the house of Medici if Clarice had been Lorenzo the man, and Lorenzo, Clarice the woman. Strozzi was a little the senior, and much the superior of Lorenzo in intellect, education, and tastes; but he did not scruple to purchase favour and patronage by adapting himself in all things to his brother-in-law's pursuits and habits, and taking a ready part in his profligate amusements and debaucheries.

'He was compelled,' says his brother, putting it as mildly as he can, 'to abandon both his mercantile projects at Rome, and, to his infinite annoyance, his studies, in which he at that time greatly delighted, and to become a courtier, and employ himself in hunting and with horses, and such-like amusements altogether foreign to his habits.

[1] Vita, p. xlv.

In a word, he had to assimilate his nature to that of his brother-in-law.'

But then he was by these means enabled to obtain for the Strozzi family that fair share of the offices and honours of the state of which they had been for many years deprived. No Strozzi had been Gonfaloniere since the year 1385. But now Filippo was able to obtain that coveted office for two of his cousins, Lionardo, and Benedetto Strozzi in succession, and once for himself. He placed also the same two members of his family at the board of a new magistracy, called 'The Seventy,' established by Lorenzo when he was placed at the head of the government. In a word, prudent Filippo Strozzi was at the age of twenty-two the most influential and powerful man in Florence.

Nevertheless, as his brother takes especial care to assure us, he did not permit all this greatness to make the least difference in his manner and mode of address. Nor would he permit others to be different in their manners towards him. 'And if any Florentine saluted him by taking off his hood out of respect, and instead of calling him plain Filippo, as heretofore, styled him Messer Filippo, thinking thereby to please him, it made him as angry as if he had been abused; and he would say that he was neither a doctor, nor a knight, to whom the title of Messere belonged, but plain Filippo, son of a citizen and merchant of Florence of the same name.'

In 1516, Leo obtained by violence the duchy of Urbino from its rightful sovereign, Francesco Maria della Rovere; and forthwith made Lorenzo Duke of Urbino, by which title he is generally known in history. Upon taking possession of this new dignity, Lorenzo urged on Filippo the acceptance of an estate in the duchy, which would give him a territorial title; and this not so much, as the Pia-

gnone brother intimates, from any affection for him, but because this worthless upstart Medici was ashamed, forsooth, to own a private untitled citizen as his brother-in-law. But Filippo, with his usual long-headedness, firmly declined this, foreseeing that such new greatness might very likely be of short duration, and declaring that he would not embark in a mode and style of life which he might by any accident of fortune be compelled, to his great mortification, to give up afterwards. 'And thus, adhering to his accustomed mode of dress, name, style of living, and citizen-like habits,' says his biographer, 'he was not obliged, when Lorenzo died, to put down so much as a single servant, which was a matter of infinite self-congratulation to him, and of praise on the part of his fellow-citizens.'

In the mean time we meet with him on one occasion as *festaiuolo*, or master of the revels, on the great Florentine festival of St. John, on the 24th of June. Some remains of the old revelry is still kept up in these unrevelling days on that anniversary; but it is only a pale copy of the old sixteenth-century roystering. We may be sure that the year when Filippo Strozzi was 'festaiuolo' the thing was not done shabbily. And old Cambi is moved by the success of the entertainments to give the matter a special record[1] in his quaint diary. Old Cambi is a sort of Florentine Samuel Pepys, equally possessed by the spirit of gossip, equally feather-headed, equally unconscious of a possible reader, but a much stricter and steadier man, as it became a disciple of Savonarola to be. He tells us how the handsome young master of the revels came out in a gown of crimson satin lined with purple satin to superintend the ceremonies. There is much processioning of the magistrates with banners, and huge wax

[1] Cambi, Istorie Delizie degli Erud. Tosc. vol. xxii. p. 44.

candles, and strewn bay-leaves and rose-leaves as usual; but the great popular amusement in the evening was furnished by a vast car representing a galley, which paraded the streets, filled with a crew of supposed madmen and devils, who delighted the populace by behaving as such. The galley in its progress through the town falls in with certain hapless individuals recognized on account of some infirmity or absurdity as butts by their fellow-citizens. Forthwith these are captured by the pirate devils of the galley, hoisted on board in a basket, set to row at pretended oars, and buffeted the while with clubs made of leather bags blown up with wind. Such was the horse-play which delighted the contemporaries of Guicciardini and Machiavelli—and a similar style of practical joking may still be observed in the streets of Florence on high occasions of carnival revelry. Our pious chronicler cannot help admitting that 'it was hugely diverting, though not quite proper on such a solemn occasion as the festival of our patron St. John the Baptist.'

Then there were long processions, in which the various monastic communities sent out their patron saints magnificently dressed, on huge cars drawn by oxen; and the Servites of the *Santissima Annunziata* represented all the patriarchs and prophets in splendid vestments, and an enormous triumphal car, drawn by oxen, on which was arranged all the vast quantity of gold and silver plate belonging to the convent, 'which the citizens had presented to the Nunziata;' so that, says Cambi, 'the procession was outwardly very fine; but inwardly poor enough, for there was no zeal, and many went away to dinner because it was so late.'

Then in the evening the masters of the revels sent out eleven great platforms drawn by oxen, on which was represented the triumph of Furius Camillus, who delivered

Rome from the barbarians, being himself an exile from the city at the time; and, who, when he would have returned to his exile, was triumphantly restored to his citizenship. It was not difficult for the Florentines to make such application of *this* moral, as our judicious and magnificent *festaiuolo*, now become a Medicean courtier, intended.

Still the munificent doings of the wealthy master of the revels were not exhausted. For on the Sunday, which happened to fall that year on the 25th, the first after St. John's day, 'there was a hunt of hares, foxes, stags, chamois, and leopards on the piazza.' There were four leopards, given by the cardinal of Ferrara, and they were brought by four huntsmen, who each carried one on the croup of his horse. 'A board,' explains Cambi, 'was fixed on the horse's back, on which stood the leopard; and the man had a leather protection around his loins, that the leopard might not scratch him.'

A ride of about a hundred miles from Ferrara to Florence with a leopard on a pillion behind one, would, it may be surmised, appear a somewhat arduous feat to a modern lover of 'sport.'

The leopards, and the stags, and the foxes, were duly 'hunted,' or 'baited' rather, on the flagstones of the old piazza, under the shadow of the matchless tower of the public palace, amid the surrounding crowds of the citizens, who had a few years before thronged those same flagstones to see Savonarola burned where the leopards were now being baited. Both exhibitions were presented to the citizens by their rulers with the same ultimate object. Savonarola was burned to frighten the people, and the leopards were baited to amuse them into submitting quietly to the hand of a master.

When the baiting was over, two bulls were slaughtered by men with swords; and then a pair of buffaloes, a

'beautiful' bear, and a very fine lion, whose name was Bau, were brought into the ring, together with a mare and two horses. Much sport was expected. But Bau, 'because of the noise of the people on the scaffolding all round,' sat down, and let the dogs bark round him as they would, declining to take any part in the proceedings. The bear showed fight, undismayed by the publicity of his position. But, says our devout and austere Piagnone chronicler, after describing what cannot be here described after him, 'this was what best pleased the girls, may God forgive them, and St. John pardon such masters of the revels!'[1]

Judging from Cambi's description of these festival doings, the office of 'festaiuolo' must have been a somewhat onerous one; though it may be supposed that the office was not often discharged in the style in which Filippo Strozzi did it.

Before long he had an opportunity of displaying his magnificence on a larger and more exciting scene. Lorenzo was to go to France; and, as the companionship of his brother-in-law had by this time become indispensable to him, he determined on taking him with him. This journey took place in the year 1518. Francis I. had been on the throne since 1515; and a marriage had been arranged by him and Pope Leo between Lorenzo and Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne et de Boulogne. Lorenzo was preparing to set out for France, to bring home his bride, when letters came from Francis, announcing the birth of his first child, and requesting that Leo would send some one to be his proxy as the infant's godfather. Lorenzo was therefore instructed to hasten his departure, and assume this commission, so that his journey might thus kill two birds with one stone.

[1] Ist. di Giovan. Cambi, Deliz. degli Erudit. Toscani, vol. xxii. p. 47.

Lorenzo, accompanied by Filippo Strozzi, Mariotto Orlandini, Benedetto Bondelmonte, and Antonio de' Medici, with twelve others, rode out of Florence on Monday the 22nd of March;[1] all were uniformly dressed in crimson velvet, says Cambi, who was, doubtless, there to see the cavalcade set forth. Their baggage, with clothes, jewels, etc., had been sent on before them. Francis was holding his court at Amboise on the Loire; and from Florence thither was a very long ride, especially for the bridegroom; of whom we are told, that his unmeasured profligacy of life had brought him to a state of health which made it very difficult for him to sit his horse.[2] Of Filippo, his inseparable companion, another historian,[3] speaking of this period, tells us that he was notable in Florence for his immense wealth, and for his brilliant talents, but a very free liver, eager in the pursuit of pleasure, and 'more licentious in his habits than perhaps was becoming in a Christian gentleman.'

The court of Francis I. was at this time the most brilliant and magnificent in Europe; it was probably also the most profligate; but, without undertaking to determine exactly how much licentiousness the old Florentine historian would have thought might become a Christian gentleman, we may be very sure that the Florentine *bourgeois* aristocracy were a match for the noblesse of the French court in either particular. It may be easily imagined that the Florentines were extremely anxious to shine in the eyes of the French court; and the latter were in their turn not sorry to have an opportunity of exhibiting their bravery to the southern strangers from the old classic abode of arts and refinement.

[1] Cambi, p. 133.

[2] Mémoires de Fleurange, Col. Petitot, vol. xvi. p. 326.

[3] Ammirato, Istorie Fiorent., tomo ix. p. 290.

According to Fleurange, who was an eye-witness of and partaker in the festival, nothing more magnificent was ever seen. Assuredly no scene could be better adapted for a display of all the gorgeousness of sixteenth-century chivalric pomp, than the grand old feudal castle of Amboise on the Loire. The vast mass of the picturesque and varied building, with its different keeps and towers, its ranges of apartments numerous enough to house a small army, and its courts extensive enough for the display of all those devices of mimic warfare, which were the favourite pastime of the period, was—and indeed is—raised high above the little town, which clusters beneath it on the river banks, on the nearly level top of a very remarkable precipitously rising rock; and our party of Florentines, when at last they reached the end of their long and tedious journey, must have been no little struck at finding themselves riding in at a small but very strong doorway, made apparently in the face of the rock at its base; and then following a road constructed after the fashion of a corkscrew stair, till after following its spiral curl in the nearly complete darkness for many a circle, it brought out horse and rider on the top of the rock, and within the main court-yard of the castle.

The baptism of the heir to the crown of France was performed, as Fleurange declares, 'with the greatest triumph possible, as was proper on such an occasion.' The great court of the castle was covered in by awnings; and there was held the banquet, 'which was marvellously triumphant;' and then 'dancing was kept up till a late hour,' as the nineteenth-century chronicler would phrase it; or as he of the sixteenth has it—'then they danced and jigged their utmost.'

Three days afterwards, the marriage took place; then the festivities were redoubled, and were, Fleurange assures

us, on such a scale as had never before been witnessed in France, or in Christendom. 'And among the other ladies, there were seventy-two young girls dressed in groups of a dozen each, one party to look like Italians, and the other like Germans, in order to dance the better. And they had tamburines, and musicians dressed in the same manner; and at the banquet, the bride, and all the princes, both French and foreigners, and all the ambassadors, ranged every man in his order; and at the other end of the table, the queen, and madame her mother, were a marvellously beautiful sight to see; for all the dishes were brought in to the sound of trumpets. And when the supper was over, there were dances and carols till past one in the morning; and it was as light as if it had been midday, from the flambeaux and torches that there were.'

The next day came the tournament, which was one of the grandest ever hitherto seen. 'For the combat was eight days' long, both within and without the lists, and on foot and on horseback. And there in all the combats was the Duke of Urbino, the bridegroom, who did the best he could before his lady-love. And after that, there was a kind of tournament, such as I have never seen except on that occasion.' This consisted in besieging and defending a wooden semblance of a town erected for the purpose; and if new in France, was not so to the Italian guests. For accounts of similar mock attacks may be met with on occasions of festivity in Italy at an earlier period than that in question; but at Amboise 'we had large cannon of wood with bands of iron, which were fired with real powder, and balls which were filled with wind, and were as large as the bung of a hogshead; these went flying among the besiegers, and knocked them over without much hurting them, so that it was most amusing to

see. . . . It was the most beautiful combat ever beheld; and the most approaching real war: yet the diversion was not agreeable to all, for there were a great many killed and wounded. When it was over, the combatants had to be parted, which it was very difficult to do; and would have been much worse if both men and horses had not been out of breath, for as long as they had any breath they fought.'

These amusements lasted from a month to six weeks, and then the king 'despatched the Duke of Urbino on his return to Florence, and his wife with him;' where they arrived on the 7th of September, 1518.

Lorenzo and his hapless young wife lived after their marriage just long enough to leave behind them a daughter—that Catherine—who, as queen of France, made a deeper mark on the history of her time than any other member of her extraordinary family. Lorenzo died on the 4th of May, 1519; having survived his wife six days.[1]

Lorenzo Strozzi, the Piagnone, feeling that the intimacy between his brother and Lorenzo de' Medici was discreditable to him, both from the private character of the man, and because he was a Medici—the successful destroyer of the liberty of his country, and wrongful usurper of supreme authority—strives all he can to show that Filippo had no real liking for his brother-in-law, and that he submitted to the intimacy thrust upon him because he could not help it. The reader may probably think that the conduct of Strozzi in consenting to be the constant companion of this worthless man, and to profit by his damaging partiality for him, is in nowise bettered by the fact (if fact it were) that he disliked him.

[1] For the evidence on which these dates rest, see note 6 to my volume on the 'Girlhood of Catherine de' Medici.'

But this defence, put forward as it is, not by one of the professed worldlings of society, be it remembered, but by the strict and pious disciple of the great reformer, is a good specimen of the prevailing morality of the time, which meets us ever and anon in our examinations of the social life of that epoch. 'Nullum numen abest, si sit prudentia.' To have manifested a sagacious and long-sighted comprehension of the combinations of circumstances and line of conduct most conducive to one's own interest, this was the highest praise that could be awarded to a man.

When after six years of daily companionship with him, Lorenzo died, Strozzi was, as his brother assures us, so far from being sorry for the event, that he remarked on the occasion to the latter, 'that he ought to thank God for having liberated him in that manner from an unmistakable danger; for that he well knew the Duke Lorenzo to have been so wholly unamenable to all good and prudent advice, that it was almost impossible but that any one who was, or was supposed to be, his supporter and friend, should not have been involved in downfall with him. While, on the other hand, he (Filippo) had been unable, he said, to see any means of separating his fortunes from those of his brother-in-law, without bringing ruin on himself; although he knew well that such greatness as that of the late duke had rarely been seen to be of a durable nature, especially in the history of this city of ours. Besides,' adds the biographer, 'it was beyond everything agreeable to him to escape from a most harassing and constant slavery; as while this brother-in-law lived, he had never been permitted to absent himself from him, whether at home, within the city, or in travelling beyond its walls.'

It is quite likely that Filippo Strozzi had sense enough

to see that the conduct of Lorenzo was leading him towards a precipice. Not only was his intellect a much finer one than that of his brother-in-law, but he knew Florence, and the signs of its humours well; while Lorenzo knew nothing of Florentine life or ways, having grown from infancy to manhood during the last period of the family banishment. His open despotism, his overbearing supersession of, and contempt for all law, and, above all, his total disregard for the appearances and decencies of respectability, were rapidly making him so intolerable to the Florentines, that Strozzi might well fear an outbreak. But the testimony of honest Benedetto Varchi, more trustworthy than that of his partial brother, leaves no doubt that such a rule in Florence as that of Lorenzo suited Filippo Strozzi and his mode of life well enough as long as it lasted, and that the favour and protection of the worthless brother debauchee, whom he despised, was very convenient to him.

A few laconic words, dropt by the old historian without any emphasis of disapprobation, or moralizing comment, with that awful unimpassioned coldness which makes the Italian histories of that period resemble photographs, on whose indifferent surface the facts have stamped themselves by some mechanical process involving no human feeling, give us to understand that Filippo Strozzi was habitually the slave of vices which in our day and country would render him wholly infamous, even in the eyes of those who allow the largest licence to the more ordinary faults and frailties of human nature. 'He had no ambition of power for himself,' says the historian;[1] 'but was content with being the friend of those who had power; not only that he might avoid by that means special imposts and

[1] Varchi, Storia Fiorentina, lib. xii. vol. ii. p. 589. Edit. Firenze, 1843.

forced loans, but that he might have licence to carry arms, and do as he pleased, especially in the matter of love intrigues.' The historian goes on to remark, that his example did much evil among the Florentine youth, 'inasmuch as all those who aimed at fashion, or at surpassing their fellows, strove to imitate him, and Giovanni Bandini, who was his first-lieutenant. All the swashbucklers and braggadocio dare-devils in the city made him their chief, and their protection against the proceedings of the magistrates.' And then, to make the amiability of the picture complete, we are told, that Filippo was the constant resource of all these profligate spendthrift young men when they wanted money; which he would supply in very considerable sums to citizens of note, taking, however, always the guarantee of another name, and making them deposit their obligations in his bank, so that he might avail himself of them at the right moment.

So prudent a youth, even in the midst of his dissipations, and the companions of them, was the young banker!

Yet nature had endowed Filippo Strozzi with one of those richly gifted organizations which, overflowing with vital force and vigour, spend only a part of it on those pursuits which in less exuberant organisms engross the entire man. In the midst of such a life, as is compendiously, but very sufficiently indicated by the words of the contemporary historian, Filippo Strozzi did not wholly abandon intellectual pursuits and pleasures. He undertook the illustration and correction of Pliny's book on natural history, a work much beyond his powers indeed, as Varchi observes, but indicative, at least, of some better tastes than the more apparent portions of his life would have led us to anticipate in him; and while distinguishing

himself as the Corypheus of the profligate and brainless Florentine "jeunesse dorée," he was at the same time in intimate relations with some of the most learned men of the day.

Meanwhile, during these same years, his wife Clarice was presenting him with a 'numerous and most beautiful family,' as Varchi tells. Speaking of the year 1530—two years, that is, after the death of Clarice,—he says, that Filippo was the father of seven sons and three daughters, of whom 'four were then of sufficient age to give promise of the high qualities they afterwards proved themselves to possess.'

It is strange that the biographer Lorenzo makes no mention of the births of these sons and daughters. Litta, in his magnificent work, records the names of seven sons and three daughters of Filippo Strozzi accordingly; but has been able to assign the date of birth to one only, Leone, who was born in 1515. Further, we know that Pietro was the eldest of the family.

As a father, Filippo is represented by his contemporaries in a far more agreeable aspect than any in which we have yet seen him. And the sort of terms on which he is said to have lived with his children, would seem to indicate, either that the usual habits in this respect in Italy were very different and more civilized than those which prevailed in our own country in those days, or else that Strozzi was, in this respect at least, greatly superior to the habits and prejudices of his day. His mode of living with them was such, says Varchi, that he was in the habit of saying that he did not consider himself to have seven sons, but four brothers and three sons; the elder having already taken their places as his friends and companions.

In the spring of the year 1519, when Strozzi was just

thirty years of age, Lorenzo de' Medici died; and Filippo, who had been his constant companion for the last six years, and the confidant and partaker of those excesses which were now prematurely killing him, had to be the equally constant attendant by his bedside. Cambi describes this death-bed scene [1] in his usual homely style. Every sort of business was banished. No citizen was allowed to come near the sick man, but only such as had been the companions of his pleasures, and buffoons, with whom in the intervals of his pain he still strove to amuse himself. He grew daily and perceptibly worse; and would not permit Filippo to leave him night nor day.

The duty must have been a sufficiently disagreeable one for a fellow-profligate; and it may be easily believed that the most earnest feeling of Filippo upon the occasion, was his expression of thankfulness when death had brought it to a conclusion.

[1] Deliz. Erud. Tosc. tomo xxii. p. 145.

CHAPTER VI.

Connection between Filippo and the Cardinal Medici.—Heritage of Clarice. — False pretence of reform. — Contrasted characters of Leo X. and Clement VII.—Filippo goes to Rome with the Cardinal Giulio.—Strozzi bank in danger.—Expedient for saving the credit of the firm.—Election of Adrian VI.—Relaxation of clerical discipline.—Members of the Medici family at the death of Leo.—Great aim of Clement VII.'s life.—Effects of clerical celibacy.—A conspiracy in Florence.—Political uses of the confessional.—Executions.—Adrian's arrival at Leghorn.—Filippo continued by him in the office of treasurer to the Apostolic Chamber.

In the last days of Lorenzo's life, the Cardinal Giulio had hastened from Rome to Florence, that he might be on the spot to provide for the safety of the Medicean interests as soon as the reins of state should drop from the hands of his dying kinsman. There might have been difficulty to be apprehended under the circumstances. But Florence was not then in one of the hot fits of her patriotism, and quietly allowed the cardinal to put his hand on her mane, and deftly mount into the vacant saddle. Indeed, the city at once found and admitted that the change from the graceless, reckless, insolent Lorenzo, to the respectable and, at all events, decent and appearance-keeping priest, was an improvement. The laws were at least less openly violated and set aside, and despotism sheathed its claws for the nonce in a paw of velvet.

And Filippo Strozzi was as great a favourite with the grave and respectable churchman as he had been with the dissolute and reprobate prince who preceded him. Or at least he seemed to be so. 'Filippo,' writes his brother Lorenzo, 'was exceedingly agreeable and acceptable to him—the cardinal—on account of the intimacy that had always subsisted between them since Filippo's first alliance with the family. At any hour of the day or night the cardinal's door was never shut to him; and he often slept with him in his little bed: nor did any one of the Medici, not even his brother-in-law, manifest so much affection for Filippo as he did; for he considered him to be very especially endowed with talent and prudence.'

In fact, they were two very 'prudent' men together, of dispositions perfectly well qualified to understand each other; and they seemed accordingly to be exceedingly fond of each other. But his brother Lorenzo admits, immediately after setting forth the above testifications of affection, that Filippo had a secret grudge against the cardinal, for having defrauded him of forty thousand *scudi* of his wife's fortune. And honest, plain-speaking Varchi[1] declares that Clement, when pope, nourished secretly a hatred for Filippo. But for the present the two prudent men have mutually need of each other, and accordingly seem the best of friends.

And then the forty thousand 'scudi' had not been altogether lost. For when Alfonsina de' Medici died, leaving eighty thousand crowns, which should have been divided between Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, and Clarice, the latter, 'being very clever, and knowing the pope and the cardinal right well,'[2] and having foreseen that she should have a difficulty in securing her heritage, had secretly during her

[1] Storia, vol. ii. p. 588. Edit. Florence, 1843.

[2] Vita di Filippo Strozzi, par Lorenzo, p. xxxvii.

mother's life 'carried off jewels and other such matters small in bulk but of great value,' in order that she might lose as little as she could help. And though the cardinal did all that he possibly could, he never was able to recover the property so carried off; or at least could not do so without an amount of scandal and loss of character, which so prudent and respectable a man could not venture on.

The cardinal, as has been said, won golden opinions from the Florentines by the manner in which he restored the government to at least some outward show of legality and decency after the death of the worthless Lorenzo, and then hastened away to the performance of some other of the more or less divine services which in those days entered into the sphere of an active churchman's duty. One Silvio Passerini, a creature of the Medici, a cardinal, and generally called by the contemporary historians the Cardinal of Cortona, from his birthplace, was left as governor of Florence; and the citizens were amused the while by Pope Leo's pretences that he was intent on a scheme for the reform, in a liberal sense, of the Florentine government. The way *not* to do a thing was, we may observe, very much the same in the sixteenth as in the nineteenth century. Pope Leo appointed a commission of inquiry. The Florentine constitution was 'under consideration.' Macchiavelli was one among others called on to furnish his ideas on the subject; and as, let who would be deceived by the Medicean reform projects, Macchiavelli was not, his ideas were chiefly busied with the task of saying something which should have as little harm in it as might be, and yet should not be too distasteful to his employers. The result was a composition, of which it has been said elsewhere, that 'the smallest-minded routine-fed red-tapist could hardly have produced a more dry,

jejune, and mechanical conception of the needs of a people, of the springs of its life, and the duties of its rulers.'[1]

The Florentines were, however, thus kept quiet under the imbecile government of the Cardinal of Cortona; while the busy Cardinal Giulio, as the right-hand man of an easy-going voluptuary pope, had to ride post to Milan, where it behoved him to exercise the functions of 'apostolic' legate to the ecclesiastical army then engaged against the French. Yes, a busy man in those days was the Cardinal Giulio. The whole weight of the papacy was on his shoulders. The maintenance of the Medicean interest in unquiet, fickle, always troublesome Florence, had to be cared for. Means for securing to himself, under decently colourable pretences, Clarice Strozzi's share of her mother's heritage, had to be thought of. Then he was Archbishop of Florence, and had all the spiritual needs and welfare of the Florentines to attend to as well. But perhaps those restless citizens gave him less trouble in that department. Look at him, reader, as he stands there immortalized on Raphael's canvas at the elbow of his cousin Pope Leo;—'Epicuri de grege porcus,' this latter one, and no mistake, if ever character were written on fleshly lineaments. The reader will probably remember the picture, the celebrated one in 'the Tribune' at Florence, in which Leo sits at a table looking at an illuminated volume, with a small, magnificently chased handbell on the carpeted table before him. There is Cardinal Giulio dutifully standing at the gross apostolic voluptuary's elbow, with his handsome, eminently Italian, and eminently priestly face, dark thoughtful eyes, and sly, treacherous-looking mouth. There they are, the two Medicean popes, selected out of that fortunate family, one after the other, as the best men then extant for governing the universal Church, and guiding

[1] Girlhood of Catherine de' Medicis, p. 40.

the spiritual advancement of mankind. And probably it would have been impossible to find 'the poor Indian, whose untutored mind sees God in clouds and hears Him in the wind,' who was not able to conceive to himself a juster and, at all events, more reverential notion of the unseen than that which had been rendered possible to these two popes by their education and social environment.

Not long after Cardinal Giulio had successfully patched up matters at Florence, and posted off to the army in Milan, Leo X. had laughed his last convivial laugh, digested his last meal, and finished "enjoying his papacy," as he called it, at Rome. He stopped digesting on the 1st of December, 1521. And the event made it necessary for that much-posting ecclesiastic, the Cardinal Giulio, to proceed with all haste to the eternal city. Passing by Florence on his way, he insisted on taking his dear friend and relative, Filippo Strozzi, with him to Rome, just as Leo had done when journeying the same road under similar circumstances thirteen years before.

Filippo was now thirty-three; but we do not find that increased years had in any way cooled the generosity of his feelings towards his powerful relatives; nor does the grudge respecting the inheritance of Clarice prevent him from being again ready to back a Medicean candidate for the papacy with his credit, and supply the sinews of war.

Yet it would seem that the result of his connection with the court under Leo had not been so happy in its results as to warrant another speculation of the same sort. Brother Lorenzo tells us that Filippo found his affairs in Rome in very serious disorder. Filippo Ridolfi was the manager of the great Strozzi bank in Rome. Ridolfi was an ancient and noble name in Florence, and is still one

of those most deservedly honoured by the Florentines of the present day. But it would seem that the manager in Rome was not gifted with all that clear-sighted prudence which distinguished his superior even in the midst of his debaucheries. For while Strozzi had been playing courtier and prime favourite to Lorenzo, and in that capacity had been distinguishing himself as the chief and patron of all the profligate youths in Florence, Filippo Ridolfi had, we are told, so imprudently launched out into loans to the apostolic court, as very seriously to endanger the firm. A large failure of one Salvator Billi at Naples, also, who was heavily indebted to the house of Strozzi, happened just before Filippo reached Rome, and inflicted what might have been just at that unfortunate moment a fatal blow, if the chief had not been on the spot to remedy matters with his wonted energy and sagacity.

The scheme which he hit on for this purpose was a remarkable one. And though it has been cursorily alluded to in a former work [1] by the present writer, it was so singular a financial operation, and throws so curious a light on the peculiarities of Roman sixteenth-century life, that some account of it cannot be omitted in a life of Filippo Strozzi.

It has been remarked, that an infinitely larger proportion of the wealth of the middle ages consisted in chattel property than is the case in these days. Jewels, plate, arms, furniture, and clothes formed a very important part of every rich man's property. And the Strozzi bank at Rome was the holder of such articles to a large amount, as security for money advanced to the pope and to others. But as all such things are especially exposed to the danger of robbery in times of public commotion and lawlessness, the interregnum between the death of one pope and the

[1] Girlhood of Cath. de' Med., p. 92.

election of his successor was well known to be a period of great risk to all such property. All law and order seem to have been suspended at these times. Life itself was by no means safe in Rome, and excesses in some shape or another were always expected. These circumstances had led to a practice among the Romans of depositing their valuables for security with some of the great and powerful owners of palaces, which served as fortresses, as soon as ever the death of a pope announced a period of anarchy. And Strozzi's creditors, as it happened, were chiefly among the great Roman magnates. Affecting, therefore, a lively sense of the risk to which the pledges he held were exposed during the interregnum, he hastened to send, wholly on that ground, all the valuable property in his hands to his principal creditors for safe keeping in their palaces. To have done this, except upon such a pretext, would of course have served only to swamp the credit of the house. But, as it was, it saved it. The creditors thus secured made no run on the bank for their deposits, and the firm had time to look around, and to recover.

The Cardinal Giulio de' Medici was not elected Heaven's vicegerent upon this occasion, notwithstanding his banker's presence and support. The Sacred College, finding themselves altogether unable to agree in the election of a pope on any of the known and recognized grounds of choice, were absolutely forced into the embarrassing position of selecting a man who had no banker to back him, and whose character was his only recommendation. The result of the given vote was no sooner irrevocable than the purple eminences were terrified at what they had done. Each of them, finding himself unable to bring to bear the simoniacal dealings he had contemplated, and despairing of making his own candidate pope, had accepted the *pis aller* of simply voting for the best man, since he

could thus allow his conscience an unusual luxury without any harm coming of it. But it never occurred to these temporary deserters from the standard of Mammon, that so many of their fellows would desert at the same moment as to cause Mammon absolutely to lose the day. And when this result was ascertained, they were truly shocked and repentant.[1]

The pope thus elected was Adrian VI., a native of the Low Countries. He was the last non-Italian pope ever elected, for the Sacred College were never guilty of the same mistake again.

On the 23rd of August, 1522, this poor stranger pope arrived at Leghorn on his way to Rome, not speaking a word of Italian, but only Latin, 'so that many bishops and some cardinals were unable to communicate with him at all.'[2] Still he began already, this poor Adrian, to attempt reform in some of the more superficial matters; and 'reproved these bishops who wore immense military beards, or were clothed in silk, or other gear not lawful for priests. For things were come to such a pass,' continues pious Cambi, 'that prelates carried swords by their sides, and wore short cloaks and beards. And I, the present writer, myself saw here at Florence, a Florentine who was Archbishop of Pisa, at twenty-four years old, to whom Pope Leo had given the see, taking it for the purpose from another yet living, who was compensated by preferment in Rome—in short the archbishopric was in plain words bought;—I saw, I say, this young archbishop riding in the streets of Florence in the day-time, with a short black Spanish cloak, that came down to his knees, with a sword by his side, and with servants following him on foot with swords in military fashion. . . . And Cardinal

[1] See Relazioni Veneti. Second Series, vol. iii. p. 74.
[2] Cambi, Deliz. degli Erudit. Tosc., tomo xxii. p. 214.

Giulio himself used always to go to church in Florence in an open rochet, without either mantle or cardinal's hat; and with a beard half way down his breast, and a posse of running footmen with swords around him, and not a priest or clerk in his company. And to this point was the church come in consequence of cardinals and prelates going masked to banquets and weddings, and even arrogating to themselves the liberty of dancing. But on Pope Adrian's arrival, and on his rebuking them for such habits, they began to feel ashamed of themselves, and our cardinal, as well as some others, removed his beard.'[1]

No sooner had that most hard-working of cardinals, 'our cardinal,' come out from the conclave which had made Adrian VI. pope, than he found it necessary to hasten back to Florence. The maintenance of the Medicean interests and fortunes there depended now solely on him. With the exception of two lads now about ten years old, the cardinal was the sole surviving male descendant of Cosimo 'pater patriæ.' The last few years had been very fatal to the race. 'When we saw the family returning triumphant into tamed and frightened Florence, after the sack of Prato in 1512, there were Giovanni, the second son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, afterwards Pope Leo X., and just now dead in 1521; his brother Giuliano, the third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, who died in 1516, without legitimate offspring; Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, son of Pietro, Lorenzo the Magnificent's eldest son, and nephew of the above-named brothers, who died, as we have seen in 1519; and the Cardinal Giulio, the illegitimate son of a younger brother of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Of all these this last now alone remained, and the two lads above referred to; but both of these were also illegitimate. One, Ippolito, was the son of the

[1] Cambi.

Giuliano above-mentioned, and was born in 1511. The other was Alessandro, reputed to be the illegitimate son of Lorenzo, the Duke of Urbino, but very generally believed to have been really the son of the Cardinal Giulio. The exact date of his birth was not known, but he was about the same age as Ippolito. These three, all equally illegitimate, the cardinal and the two boys, were now the only remaining descendants of Cosimo 'pater patriæ,' who died in 1464. But there were legitimate descendants of his younger brother Lorenzo. And it was the great object of the Cardinal Giulio's life, not only to secure the Medicean rule in Florence, but to contrive that it should pass to one of the illegitimate scions of his own branch of the family, instead of the legitimate descendants of the younger line.

Both as cardinal, and afterwards as Pope Clement VII., this was the *great* aim of this man's busy and laborious life. Amid all the difficulties and adversities of his papacy, this was still the *first* object to be secured by *any* requisite amount of labour, patience, falsehood, tergiversation, treachery, and bloodshed.

It is a curious matter of reflection, such a life devoted with such intensity of purpose to such an object. Rome has determined that her priests should be unmarried, in order, we are told, to secure the undivided devotion of their lives and labours to 'the interests of religion.' And in the Romish sense of the phrase, it would seem to do so. That the provision in question infallibly operates indeed to make the priestly order highly noxious to the spiritual and moral 'interests' of the society among which they live, has been long since discovered, and placed among the facts which need no further questioning. But the 'interests of religion' as understood at Rome are another and very different

matter. The power of the church, which is what is there meant by the phrase, has doubtless been, and is being, served by priestly celibacy. But it is curious to observe, that it has not unfrequently failed to attain even this its real and true object; especially in the case of those captains of the hierarchical army, where its operation was of the most importance. More than one pope, besides Clement VII., has made the 'interests of religion,' even in the Romish apostolical sense of that term, a quite secondary object to some other aim of private and personal ambition.

There are two widely different sorts of men, two priestly types, both common in the ranks of Rome's hierarchy, on whom this policy of cutting them off by imposed celibacy from all the strongest affections, joys, sorrows, and sympathies of other men, acts in different manners; and in both cases in a way equally hostile to the interests of religion. Of these two types of sacerdotal character, the two Medicean popes, Leo X. and Clement VII., are very complete and well-marked specimens. If the reader has ever looked on the two men as they are represented side by side in the picture before alluded to, or in any of the engravings from it, the remembrance of their physical appearance, and of the strong contrast between them, will help him to conceive the characters of both of them. For they both look just the men they were.

The first is the jovial, self-indulgent sensualist, whose enforced bachelorhood, by denying to him those ties which might have called forth redeeming portions of character, abandons him to the gross materialism of an eat-and-drink-for-to-morrow-we-die existence. Such men, too earthly in their nature for any purely spiritual affections, or large or lofty views of human duties and destinies,

are yet often saved from mere swinish life by the working of family ties, and the emotions of a husband and a father. These saving helps are denied to such organizations by Rome's providence, and the frequent recurrence of the type of the sensual materialist priest is the result. Such a man was Pope Leo, who was so far from allowing any selfish indulgence or low pleasure to be interfered with by consideration of the interests of religion, that it may be doubted whether he ever attained any clear consciousness that religion *had* interests which could be at variance with such claims on him; and who, when he announced his intention of '*enjoying* the papacy that God had given him,' probably did so with a comfortably slumbering conscience.

Clement VII. was as marked a specimen of the other species of churchman. His was an essentially and pre-eminently base and grovelling soul, invincibly fixed on 'low ambition and the pride of kings.' No cutting off from natural human interests could avail to wean such a man from the perverseness of his vulgar ideal. It is curious to see how the intense worldliness of the man finds means of gratification in securing power and pre-eminence to the illegitimate offshoot of the Medicean name who is to come after him. That 'Medici' should be a princely name in Italy, that it should be 'greater' than Sforza, Este, Colonna, or Farnese, this seemed to him to be worth any dereliction of the interests of religion, and even of the papacy, any turpitude, any falsehood, any crime. Add, that the man was also by nature cowardly, secretive, and treacherous, so that it was most congenial to him to pursue the end he had in view by perfection of cunning and deception, by infinite 'prudence,' and continually seeming to be something he was not, and the character of Clement VII., as it has been with much

unanimity and consistency handed down to us, will be tolerably complete.

The game this wily worldling had to play just then in Florence was a difficult one. The city which had cast out from it the Medici in the time of their most flourishing power, was not likely to suffer itself to be bitted and ridden quietly by a churchman with no other surviving member of his family to help him. There was also another source of possible danger to be guarded against.

The representative of the other branch of the Medici race was at that time the celebrated captain, known in every page of contemporary Italian history as Giovanni delle Bande Nere. Though then but twenty-four years old, he had already won golden opinions; and it was by no means improbable that, even if Florence were led by the old adherents of the Medici name to place one of that family at the head of the state, it might occur to the citizens to prefer the legitimate heir to the family honours and property in the person of a young general universally well spoken of, to an illegitimate member of the race in the person of an equally universally detested priest.

It was on the 9th of January that Adrian VI. was elected; and the Cardinal Giulio lost no time in hurrying back to Florence. It was a bad time of the year for travelling in any way; but, to make it worse, the route by land was rendered impracticable by the warfare which was raging at Sienna. The Duke of Urbino (not Lorenzo de' Medici, but the real duke of the Rovere family, whom Leo had deprived of his dukedom) was now in revenge laying siege to that city, and the cardinal could not therefore pass by that road. There remained the sea; and by sea the indefatigable cardinal left Civita Vecchia, for Leghorn. And on this journey also Filippo Strozzi, much against his will, as his brother declares,

accompanied him. It was exceedingly inconvenient to Strozzi to leave his affairs at Rome, which urgently demanded his presence just then; as, indeed, we may well suppose to have been the case so shortly after a narrow escape from bankruptcy. The cardinal, however, was pressing in his request; and prudent Filippo thought it on the whole better to comply.

It was not long before the dangerous temper of the public mind at Florence manifested itself in a manner that required clearly enough the presence of the master.

The anti-Medicean party there had of course begun to plot the overthrow of their power from the time that they recovered it in 1512. We have seen one conspiracy and its usual results in execution, rack, and exile. But the Medici, and especially the Cardinal Giulio, knew their countrymen far too well to imagine that conspiracy against them could be *put down*. All that they could hope to do, was with utmost vigilance to cut off the blossoms of the plant as fast as they budded forth. And the dangerous fermentation of discontent was excited to more than ordinary activity at the time in question, just after the election of Pope Adrian, by temptations and promises of assistance from France. It was from Francis I., as disloyal and base a liar and as cruel-minded a tyrant as ever sat on throne, 'though the first chevalier and gentleman of his day,' that the liberty-loving burghers of Florence expected assistance in their attempt to get rid of their tyrants. They hoped in *those* days that grapes *might* be gathered from thorns and figs from thistles.

It was while the French were still in possession of a considerable portion of the Duchy of Milan, before they were driven out of it by the forces of Charles V., that a French courier was one day arrested in Florence. Nothing was found on him; but he was condemned to death,

and told to use the few hours which remained to him in making his peace with heaven, for which purpose a confessor should be sent him. The cardinal still believed that the man must have letters, which would furnish evidence against some of the most dangerous men in Florence; and would, therefore, have given much to know all that the condemned might say in his last confession. But the seal of confession is sacred; and it was not for so respectable a churchman as the cardinal to be guilty of the sacrilege of breaking it. So a police spy, dressed to represent a friar, was sent to the poor man, and forcibly pointed out to him, that the only hope of saving his soul lay in the most complete and detailed avowal. He was thus induced to confess that there was a letter sewn into a certain part of the lining of his cloak; and the important secret was at once carried to the cardinal. Nothing more was ever heard or seen of the unfortunate courier; but on that same evening Jacopo Diacceto was arrested. This young man was one of a knot of friends, who used to meet and talk in the gardens of the Ruccellai family on all the subjects which a despotic government least loves its subjects to occupy themselves with. There were Alamanni, Ruccellai, Diacceti, Bondelmonti, among them. Macchiavelli might not unfrequently have been seen there; and the Medicean government knew well that the set who frequented the Ruccellai gardens comprised all that was most hostile to despotic rule in Florence. The infamous stratagem, therefore, which, by abusing the confessional as a means of betraying a penitent, put Jacopo Diacceto in the cardinal's power, was an important success. One of the set of friends, Antonio Brucioli, instantly on hearing of the arrest of Diacceto, took horse, was just in time to get out of Florence before the closing of the gates at nightfall, and rode hard to warn Luigi

Alamanni, a prominent member of the little society, and a poet of some fame. He was at a villa near Figline, some fifteen miles from Florence; and had thus time to get across the Apennine into the states of the Duke of Urbino. Another, Luigi Alamanni, the poet's cousin, less fortunate than he, was in garrison at Arezzo, and was there arrested and brought to Florence. Zanobi Bondelmonti, another of the set, hurried home on the first news of the arrest, with the intention of concealing himself 'in one of those secret hiding-places which are usually contrived for such occasions in large houses,' writes the historian Jacopo Nardi,[1] who gives a detailed account of this affair. But his wife, a woman of judgment and presence of mind, more worthy of a man than a woman, says Nardi, drove him out of the house, 'almost by force,' put into his hand all the money she could on the spur of the moment get together, and bade him lose not an hour in getting beyond the frontier. Leaving the city by the Porta Pinti, he met the cortége of the cardinal coming in from his evening drive; and had barely time to escape his eye by throwing himself into the shop of a sculptor close to the gate. He started on foot as soon as ever the enemy had passed, reached the frontier safely, and found an asylum in the house of the *Podestà* of Castelnuovo, in the territory of Ferrara, one Ludovico Ariosto, who had been wont, whenever he came to Florence, to be the guest of Bondelmonti.

It was well for those who thus put themselves out of the power of the tyrant. For, to the surprise and disgust of all the party, Luigi Diacceto, at the first turn of the rack confessed everything; admitted that the conspirators had intended to assassinate the cardinal, and answered whatever further questions were put to him.

[1] Istorie di Firenze, libro vii. vol. ii. p. 87. Edit. 1842.

'We were told,' says Nardi, 'that he confessed that he was influenced by revenge for having been refused a vacant place for which he had applied. We were told also,' adds the historian, 'that at the point of death he begged his confessor, in the presence and hearing of the "black brothers," who, in conformity with their vows, were attending him during his last hours, to inform the magistrates that he had been driven by the stress of torment to inculpate wrongfully Tommaso Soderini; and that when this confession thus attested had been laid before the cardinal's secretary, it was replied, "we want no other confession from him but that which we have had already."' But the cautious and conscientious historian gives both reports merely as such, adding as to the latter, 'that it is almost too atrocious to be believed.'

Of course the two unfortunate youths who had fallen into the clutches of the Medici were beheaded on that same block in the centre of the old Bargello court, which had so recently been stained by the blood of other victims to the cause of 'order;' and the cardinal flattered himself that the Medicean power was proportionably the more durably established in Florence. But it may be easily believed that Filippo Strozzi judged more accurately the probable result of such measures; and that, situated as he was, he would have fain have had no such acts scored up against the Medici and their friends. No man knew better than he how great were the probabilities that some unforeseeable and violent change in the strength of parties in the city, some chance opportunity, or some sudden outbreak of popular indignation, might hurl the Medici into exile, to the great danger of all those who had shown themselves their partisans. But the profit to be made out of their favour, while their star was in the

ascendant, was too important for him to relinquish it. It was the stake he had played for ever since he had, at twenty years old, ventured on the dangerous step of marrying a Medicean wife. And now he could only keep a vigilant eye on the weathercock of Florence politics, strive to make himself as little obnoxious to the liberal party as possible, and hold himself in readiness for all contingencies.

On the 23rd of August, 1522, Adrian arrived at Leghorn, on his way from Spain to Rome, to take possession of the papacy. For he had been elected in his absence from the conclave. Filippo Strozzi was one of four ambassadors sent down to Leghorn by Florence, to congratulate the new pope on his elevation,[1] and to offer him the city's homage, according to the usual etiquette.

Adrian confirmed Filippo in his appointment as treasurer to the apostolic chamber on this occasion. But, a pope who spent one dollar a day for his household expenses,[2] and drew that dollar forth from his purse punctually every morning, delivering it with his own hand into that of his housekeeper for the daily expenditure, was not likely to make so profitable a client to the bank as the jovial spendthrift Leo. Adrian would not be likely to bring his banker within danger of bankruptcy by the excess of the advances required from him, it is true. But, considering the business habits of the others of Filippo's apostolic customers, and the net result of his operations, as shown by the amount of property the banker left behind him at his death, it may be surmised that, despite occasional groans and complainings over losses, a spendthrift pope was in the sixteenth century, much as other spendthrifts are in the nineteenth, a more profitable cus-

[1] Vita, p. xxxviii.

[2] Relat. Ven. Second Series, tom. iii. p. 113.

tomer to his accommodating man of business than such an economist as poor Adrian.

Fortunately for himself, for the Sacred College of Rome, for all gay and gallant bishops, for his banker, and for everything and everybody—unless, indeed, for the spiritual interests of the Church of Christ—Adrian's incumbency of the papacy did not last long.

He died on the 23rd of September, 1523, after a reign of little more than twenty months.

CHAPTER VII.

Election of Clement VII.—A bet, and its consequences.—State of Italian politics.—Italian nationality.—Connection between Clement and Strozzi.—Consequences of the battle of Pavia.—Colonna raid against the Pope.—Clement sends Strozzi to Naples as hostage.—Clement breaks the treaty for which Strozzi was given as hostage.—The Pope's vengeance on the Colonnas.—Indignation of Clarice against Clement.—Great danger to which Strozzi was exposed.—His plan for escape.—Discontent in Florence.—Strozzi set at liberty.—The Constable Bourbon's march on Rome.—His position and character.—That of George Frundsberg, the Lutheran leader.—Futile attempts to arrest the march of the army towards Rome.—The sack of Rome.—Death of Bourbon.—Escape of Strozzi out of Rome.

VERY shortly after superintending the examination, torture, and decapitation of the enemies of his house's greatness, the busy cardinal was summoned in all haste to Rome by the death of Pope Adrian. With the cardinal 'business was business;' and he was always ready for business, whether it were signing the death-warrants of a batch of conspirators as temporal prince at Florence, or performing the decorous farce of imploring the inspiration of the Most High for the due choice of a pontiff over the universal Church. The conclave spent nearly two months 'contesting the papacy with incredible intrigues and pertinacity between the older and the younger cardinals,'[1] and on the 19th of November elected our cardinal.

The new pope's first intention, we are told, was to retain his own name, and call himself Pope Julius III.

[1] Varchi, Storia Fiorentina, lib. ii. tom. i. p. 68. Edit. 1843.

But it was pointed out to him, that the popes who had retained their own name after consecration had almost invariably died within the year, or little more. The fact, indeed, was so, and has continued so since that time. This 'law,' moreover, had just then been newly manifested in the case of Adrian. So Giulio de' Medici, justly feeling that the existence of such a natural law was in no degree less credible than much else which he was called on to believe, showed himself amenable to reason, and changed his name to Clement VII.

Precedent offered him two or three names, each involving in the assumption of it a tolerably pungent satire on his life and acts. There would have been a fair amount of hypocrisy in styling him 'Innocent,' or 'Pius.' But the inevitable consciousness of that cold-blooded and vindictive cruelty, which never forgave an offence, nor spared an offender at his mercy, prompted 'Clement' as the designation which embodied the *most* monstrous lie, and held out to the world promise of a virtue which least of all others it was in his heart to practise.

Of his 'clemency,' as Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, we have had a notable proof in the executions which were among his latest cares before hurrying up to Rome to be present at the conclave. And scarcely had he become Rome's seventh 'Clement,' ere his sacred hand was again dabbling in blood, in the perpetration of a deed of which the vindictive atrocity gave a just measure of the *mercy* of Christ's infallible vicar on earth. While the conclave was sitting, bets on the issue of it were rife in the cities of Italy. Among a host of others, one Piero Orlandini, a Florentine citizen of good repute, made a bet with Giorgio Benintendi, that the Cardinal Giulio would not be elected pope. Orlandini of course lost his bet; but when Benintendi came to him for payment of it, he said

that before paying he should like to see whether the election was held canonical. Unfortunately the lightly spoken word, which was overheard, struck too truly upon too sore a place for it to be overlooked or forgiven: in truth, the election was *not* canonical; the illegitimate birth of the Cardinal de' Medici being, according to the canons, a fatal bar to his eligibility to the papal throne. So at one o'clock that day the indiscreet talker was seized; and having been duly racked (though in this case there was no shadow of a pretence of discovering anything from the culprit's confession), was at five decapitated in that blood-reeking court-yard of the Bargello. Clement, it is true, was still in Rome; but so well instructed in his will was his creature, the president of 'the eight,' that when one of that magistracy, who had proposed to defer the execution till orders could be had from Rome, voted against the immediate capital punishment, the president, 'a sagacious and ill-conditioned man,' the historian tells us, said, with a grim smile, 'the execution has been voted, Signori, for here are seven black beans out of the eight: it would be better that all the eight should be black; so we will vote again, if you please.' And this time the eight beans were all black.[1]

A clear and intelligible detail of the rapidly succeeding changes in the political situation in Italy, during the early years of Clement VII.'s papacy, would necessarily be long and exceedingly tiresome to the reader; and happily such an exposition is by no means necessary to the adequate comprehension of all that is interesting in the general historic features of the time. The ready apprehension of them is unfortunately rendered but too easy, by the illustrations furnished by the drama now being acted on the stage of Europe.

[1] Varchi, loc. cit., p. 73.

Francis I. of France, and the Emperor Charles V., were intriguing, lying, making and breaking treaties, and fighting for Italy. Pretensions, fraudulent and fabulous, to Milan and to Naples, were the pretext common to both the plunderers: neither of these great men professed to be fighting for an idea; for no man then in Europe would have been deceived by the assertion if they had made it. But both occasionally affected to be anxious to secure justice for the weak and effete successor of the once strong-handed Sforzas of Milan. The Venetians, the Genoese, the Florentines, the minor dukedoms and principalities, had all a shrewd suspicion and heavy fear upon them that whichever potentate succeeded in decisively overcoming his rival would swallow them up. But their only idea of providing against this danger consisted in allying themselves now with one, and now with the other of the contending parties; and their moves and motives in all these ever newly-made and ever newly-broken alliances, were complicated and diversified by the changing and opposite dangers of siding on the one hand with the weaker party, so as to share his discomfiture, or of giving their assistance, heart and hand, to the stronger, by which they might make him *so* strong as to enable him finally to crush and absorb them all. The pope was moved by similar considerations in his efforts to preserve or add to the states of the church, complicated in the case of a Medicean pope by his still more violent efforts to establish and secure a despotism in Florence. He was, moreover, further distinguished from the other players in this miserable game by the great use he made in the mêlée of 'spiritual arms,' by which is to be understood a freer and more recognized power of breaking all treaties, engagements, or oaths whatsoever, and the privilege of authorizing at pleasure any one else to do the same.

The result of all this is, that the history of those years in Italy reads like an account of some mazy tangled dance, in which the performers are continually changing partners, giving hands across, advancing and retiring, and grouping themselves in fresh combinations. No sooner has the reader succeeded in understanding that the pope and the Venetians, and the French king, are for the present allies fighting against the emperor, than ere half a dozen pages of his historian have been turned, 'the allies' mean some quite different combination; and all the parties are fighting against those *with* whom they were fighting a few pages back. The two great leading figures—the most Christian king and the most Catholic emperor—stand out clear and well defined enough; they, their objects, and aims. The position has in its general features been an often recurring one in Italian history; but if any one should think that even now the contemporary history of that unfortunate country is wearing strangely analogous appearances, he must bear in mind that there is now one important actor to be counted with who did not exist in those former ages—the Italian nation. Even in Florence, that most republican of republics, the people had no other object than to get rid of a tyrant who especially galled them. They had, as has been seen, little or no idea of civil liberty; and, above all, their aspirations, hopes, and aims, were exclusively Florentine, and in no degree whatsoever Italian. Italian nationality is the creation of modern circumstances; and if it is as yet capable of only partial and imperfect activity, it exercises, at all events, a vast power of passive resistance, which is alone sufficient to alter all the probabilities as to the issue of the old quarrel.

Pope Clement began his papacy by ranging himself on the side of the emperor. The Venetians, the Duke of

Milan, the Siennese, and Genoese, leagued themselves together with the pope on the same side. The constable Bourbon had just then deserted the French king, and gone over to the emperor. Bourbon was a host in himself, and Charles V. seemed just then to be in the ascendant.

Immediately on Clement's election, Filippo Strozzi hastened from Florence to Rome, and was received by the pope, says his brother,[1] 'with such favour and distinction, as to afford a proof that there was no man more acceptable and more dear to him.' Filippo, confirmed of course in his position of banker and treasurer in the apostolic chamber, took up his residence in Rome; and it was remarked that no man about the court was more frequently with his holiness 'in his private and familiar hours,' says brother Lorenzo; who tells us further, that Filippo never failed to afford him 'accommodation'—the identity of the word with our classic phrase for the furnishing of ready cash is amusing—in all his needs on the most liberal terms; acting, indeed, says Lorenzo, more as a friend than as a man of business. In a word, 'he omitted nothing calculated to inspire affection and goodwill in the pope towards him.'

The radical Piagnone brother, all ardent democrat as he was, with small love for princes and potentates in general, and with a special hatred for all such of the Medicean breed, yet cannot abstain from boasting at every opportunity of his brother's intimacy with these great ones of the world. But he invariably hastens to assure his reader that all Filippo's apparent friendship for them was '*pour le bon motif*;' for what he could get by them. The Florentine radical seems to feel towards the high personages who had the distribution of good things in their hands, much as an Israelite might be

[1] Vita, p. xxxix.

supposed to feel towards the Gentiles. To dwell in their courts is only excusable on plea of the prospect of spoiling the Egyptians: on the present occasion, after telling us all that Filippo did to acquire the good graces of the pope, he hastens to add: 'because Filippo was greatly desirous of obtaining for his eldest son, Piero, a cardinal's hat, to the end that the Strozzi family might be through him honoured by that dignity, which it had never yet enjoyed.' Many a nineteenth-century Englishman would, it may be feared, pay his court to men in power from precisely similarly low motives; but an enthusiastically admiring biographer would not eagerly put forward the interested views of his hero as a triumphant justification of his connection with them.

Filippo himself no doubt knew Clement well, and esteemed him accordingly; and the latter was probably as well aware of the real nature of his banker and friend's sentiments towards him. Each hoped to make use of the other; and each trusted in his own superior cunning and 'prudence' to come off best in the match of false-seeming and hypocrisy that was being played out between them. Strozzi, on his part, hated Clement with that hatred which a proud low nature feels for the man whose contumely he is obliged to swallow, and whose injuries and treacheries he is forbidden to resent by a sense of his own interest; while Clement's feelings towards Strozzi were tinctured by no more of human sentiment than are those of a chess-player towards one of his pieces: but if the accommodating banker had needed any enlightenment as to the nature of his sovereign's friendship for him, he had not long to wait for it.

Clement had begun his reign, as has been said, by taking part with Charles against Francis. But on the 24th of February, 1525, came the celebrated battle of

Pavia, which made the king a prisoner, and raised the power of the emperor to such a pre-eminence as to terrify all Italy. As usual, the various states and princes began at once to feel the necessity of trimming the balance a little: if the French king were allowed to be utterly vanquished and put down, all Italy, it was very clear, would be merely one province of the emperor's huge dominions. Besides this necessity, common to most of the Italian states, Clement had just then a special cause of hostility to the emperor: he had advanced a hundred and twenty-five thousand florins to the viceroy of Charles V. in Naples, for the payment of the Spanish troops, which was as usual in arrear, on condition that the viceroy should put him in possession of the city of Reggio, in the dukedom of Ferrara, which Alfonso, the sovereign of that territory, had taken from the Church during the pontificate of Adrian. The viceroy, as soon as ever he had received the money, thought no more of performing his part of the bargain; having received a large sum from Alfonso [1] as a bribe for breaking it. Clement complained to the emperor, who replied that he had not authorized the viceroy to make any such bargain, and that he could not acknowledge it. He said not a word, however, about paying back the money; and the pope's reiterated demands on the viceroy had no other effect than that of making the fraudulent creditor an enemy.

Clement gnashed his teeth with rage secretly, and was not long in hitting upon a means by which he hoped to revenge himself safely on his 'most Catholic' enemy. It was known that the Marchese di Pescara, the general-in-chief of the imperial forces in Lombardy, was to a certain degree discontented with the treatment he had received at the hands of his master. Building on this, Clement

[1] Varchi. Edit. cit., p. 86.

conceived a scheme of seducing him from his allegiance by the offer of the crown of Naples for himself, if he would devote himself and the army under his command to the expulsion of the 'barbarian' from Italy. Pescara, as is well known, lent himself in earnest to the scheme of the conspirators, or pretended to do so, until he was master of the whole plan; and then, either in pursuance of his original intention, or changing his mind as to his own line of conduct in the matter, revealed the whole to Charles.

It may be easily imagined that that 'most Catholic' monarch felt towards Clement in a manner which led him to distinguish very nicely between the infallible head of the universal Church and the sovereign of the ecclesiastical states. The line of demarcation now so apparent to Charles has the property of becoming visible or invisible to royal eyes, according as the spiritual character of the holy father is invoked to sanction ecclesiastical offences against them or against the people. It now became so palpable to the 'most Catholic' emperor, that though he retained the utmost respect and reverence for the vicegerent of heaven, he thought that a little correction administered to the sovereign of Rome would not be amiss; and nothing could be easier than to find means ready to his hand for the infliction of it.

The Colonnas were of course ready for a rebellion on the slightest encouragement. Indeed, the Cardinal Pompeo Colonna, who specially hated Clement, fancied that if he could put his holy father the pope out of the way, either by murdering or deposing him, he might very likely be able to get himself elected in his place. So when Don Ugo di Moncada, Charles's general at Naples, proposed to the Colonnas to join him in a little frolic at Clement's expense, the noble and most reverend members of that powerful family jumped at the proposal. They

knew that the pope had no troops disposable, as he had recently, 'not less,' says Varchi, 'in defiance of the dictates of prudence, than in obedience to those of avarice,' discharged them all on signing a truce some little time previously with Vespasian, the son of Prospero Colonna. Their united forces, accordingly, one morning entered Rome altogether without opposition, and marched at once to the Vatican. They completely sacked, 'not only the pope's palace, and the residences of many gentlemen and prelates,' says the historian, 'but also, with unheard-of avarice and impiety,' robbed the sacristy of St. Peter of everything it contained.

Clement had had barely time to escape into the castle of St. Angelo; but as he found there neither soldiers nor ammunition, nor even food for above three days, he was constrained at the end of that time to send a message to Don Ugo, begging him to come and treat with him for his deliverance. The most reverend Cardinal Pompeo Colonna was urgent with the general to do nothing of the sort. But Don Ugo had no hope of becoming pope; and thinking that Clement's chastisement had gone far enough, moved, moreover, as Varchi hints, by a promise of a sum of money for his own private purse, he consented to a treaty by which the pope agreed to pardon the Colonnas freely for all they had done against him; to do nothing to revenge himself on them; to withdraw his troops from Lombardy; and to undertake nothing in any way, or under any pretext, against the emperor; while on his part, Don Ugo agreed on these conditions to restore the pope to liberty, and quit Rome quietly.

To these terms Clement, in the impossibility of doing better, agreed; but of course nobody dreamed of taking his word for the fulfilment of them. And this brings us to the singularly unpleasant part in this drama imposed

by the pope on his dear friend and accommodating man of business, Filippo Strozzi. Filippo, it seems, was with him in St. Angelo during his confinement. Don Ugo peremptorily required a hostage for the exact performance of the stipulations. Filippo was the very man to render him this service;—unexceptionable to the Spanish general from his birth, position, and wealth, and, as we may fancy the friendly pope urging, so thoroughly acquainted with him, Clement, as to feel perfect confidence that he would run no danger from any breach of the conditions of the treaty.

Filippo's knowledge of his old friend, on the contrary, was such as to make him feel that to go as a hostage for his good faith was one of the last things in the world that he would have wished to undertake. He deemed it, however, either impossible or imprudent to refuse; and was accordingly marched off a prisoner to Naples by Don Ugo di Moncada.

'And now,' says Varchi, thus concluding his account of this remarkable occurrence, 'if anybody should wonder, as well they may, how it could possibly come to pass that neither the people of Rome, nor any other human being, bestirred themselves to help the pope in this his great danger, against such a small number of enemies—for they were in all, both horse and foot, not more than two thousand men—let him know that Clement was at that time most hateful to men of all sorts and classes, and that for various reasons. On the clergy he had imposed new and unwonted tithes; from the officials of the Roman court he had on many occasions and for many months together kept back their pay; from the public professors of literature in the schools he had taken away their stipends; on commerce, stagnant as it was, on account of the wars that were raging, and the fear of others that threatened, he had imposed exceedingly heavy customs

and taxes. The soldiers of his own guard were so poorly and so irregularly paid, that it was with the greatest difficulty they could maintain themselves and their horses. He had thrown down the houses of many individuals for the sake of widening the streets of Rome, without ever paying them for their property. He suffered the people to be oppressed and starved, not so much by the natural scarcity and difficulties of those years, as by granting, either for money or for favour, privileges and monopolies to forestallers and regraters, whose operations monstrously enhanced the price of the necessaries of life. And, in a word, the matter had come to such a point, that not only the friars in their pulpits, but many hermits in the squares of the city, preached to the people, that not only the utter ruin of Italy, but even the end of the world was at hand; and some of them, thinking that things could not be worse than they were, went so far as to maintain that Pope Clement was no other than antichrist.'[1]

Clement, the same historian assures us, knew this, and all that men said of him and his papacy right well; and the knowledge of it added intensity to the burning desire for revenge which was consuming him when, by virtue of his treaty with Don Ugo, he came forth from St. Angelo, and returned to his plundered and desolated palace. His first step was to take into his pay two thousand Swiss; then he sent to Don Giovanni de' Medici, him who is celebrated in history as 'Giovanni delle Bande Rere'—John of the black bands (from the black uniform of the troops he had raised and trained), and who had the reputation of being the best soldiers in Italy. This celebrated captain was the son of Giovanni de' Medici, the head of the younger branch of that family, by Caterina Sforza, and was the father of Cosimo de' Medici, who eventually

[1] Varchi, Storia Fiorentina, lib. ii. Edit. cit., p. 105, tom. i.

became Duke of Florence at the extinction of the elder branch. He was then commanding the Florentine troops in Lombardy, which formed a portion of those forces that Clement had, by his treaty with Don Ugo, undertaken to withdraw. Clement bade him send to Rome forthwith seven of his famous black companies, 'who,' says Varchi, 'though they were not very many in number, were men of such a stamp that there was nothing they would not dare to attempt, and scarcely anything in which they would not succeed.' The pope at the same time wrote private letters to the chiefs of the league, warning them to pay no heed to any statement respecting a treaty made by him with the emperor, and assuring them of his intention to carry on the war with the utmost energy. Besides the two thousand Swiss and the seven Black Companies sent by Don Giovanni, the pope bargained with several of the lawless ruffian barons of his own states—a Colonna of Palestrino, who was at feud with the rest of his family, a Savelli, an Orsini, and a Farnese—to supply him with a thousand horsemen.

The first article of the treaty, for the due execution of which Filippo had been given as hostage, was, it will be remembered, the free and entire pardon of the Colonnas for all that they had done against the pope; but as soon as ever Clement had got the above troops together, he commenced such an attack upon that family as rarely any pope has made upon non-heretical enemies. Upon this occasion, at all events, the spiritual and the temporal arm pulled in perfect concord together: the troops were directed to enter the territories of the Colonnas, and to spare nothing, neither property nor life, to burn and destroy houses, men, women, and children. Fourteen of the castles (by which word must be understood fortresses with more or less of villages attached to them) belonging

to the proscribed family were razed to the ground. 'And an infinite number of men and women,' says honest Varchi, 'suffered much of wrong and shame, although they had been wholly blameless in all these matters.'

The 'spiritual arm' meanwhile was working with unflagging energy for the more perfect gratification of the papal vengeance. Clement fulminated excommunications and interdicts, and every kind of curse in Rome's well-furnished spiritual arsenal, upon the territories, the habitations, and the persons of the devoted family, their partisans and adherents. It was a Glencoe massacre, with the additional zest of killing souls as well as bodies. To massacre husbands and wives, parents and children, in each other's sight might glut the revengeful rage of a rude layman. But to despatch them without shrift or sacrament, despairing, into an eternity of torment,—this had a flavour of vengeance fit for the spiritual palate of an offended pope, even though that pope were a Medici.

Manners of the time! Yes; that a pope who could absolve himself from all obligation of an oath as easily as he could wash his hands, should break a treaty when even laymen were continually doing as much, was of course no marvel—the only strange thing being, that anybody should have ever thought it worth while to exact any promise or oath from a 'spiritual person.' That an offended sovereign should burn, slay, and lay waste was natural enough. That an offended pope should curse and anathematize as well, was also to be expected; and thus far Clement was acting quite according to 'the spirit of the age' in which he lived. But if the Colonnas and their friends had no just ground of complaining against the pope, such was not the case with Filippo Strozzi. To abandon thus a hostage to his fate, under circumstances, too, which indicated

clearly enough that it had been the intention of him for whom the pledge was given to do so at the very moment of entering into the bond,—this was a damning deed, even according to the morality of the sixteenth century. It was more; it was wholly ungentlemanlike; it was mean, base, treacherous, shabby, false, in one of the very few circumstances of life in which a man was expected to be true. It was a deed that, in all probability, no one of those ruthless, crime-stained, barbarous barons whom the pope had hired to do the secular part of his vengeance for him would have stooped to. To such conduct is due the remarkable tone of contempt which is mingled with the hatred of Clement, that may be read in almost every page of the contemporary historians.

The Bishop of Liege, whom the pope had, on the instant he recovered his freedom, sent off to France to intimate to the French king that he had no intention of observing the treaty he had made, passed through Florence on his way northwards. While there he communicated to the Cardinal of Cortona, who was governor of Florence for Clement, the gist of the errand on which he was going. But he made no mention, as it happened, of the hostages given by the pope. And as he was the first traveller who had reached Florence from Rome since the signing of the treaty, no other news had yet come to the former city of the conditions which the pontiff had subscribed. The Bishop of Cortona, therefore, was not aware that there was any special reason why he should not speak of the pope's intention to break the treaty in confidence to Clarice, Filippo's wife, with whom, it seems, he was on terms of intimacy. When, therefore, a few hours later it was known in Florence that Clement had given hostages for the due performance of the conditions he was deliberately determined to break, and that the chief of these was

her husband Filippo, that fearless and high-spirited dame, who on more than one occasion, as will be seen, took the more manly part in the troublous tasks that lay before her and her husband, felt as a dutiful daughter of Mother Church would not wish to feel towards the holy father; and, what was more, spoke out her feelings in a manner that few would then have ventured to do in Florence. She had remained in that city when Filippo had gone to Rome on the election of Clement, because she was much out of health. But now, though by no means thoroughly recovered, she at once got into her litter, and had herself conveyed to Rome, to see what could be done for her husband's safety. Filippo, she said, was basely and foully sent 'like an innocent lamb' to the slaughter. And though 'an innocent lamb' is about the last animal in creation to whom, according to our notions of the great financier's character, we should think of comparing him, it must be admitted that even the most crafty fox might find such a predicament equally unpleasant; and that, without exaggeration, the position in which Clement had placed his dear friend, his banker, and kinsman, was pretty nearly tantamount to sending him to certain death.

It was fortunate for Filippo that he had been delivered into the hands of Don Ugo, the Spanish general, instead of into those of the Cardinal Colonna. The former had carried him off to Naples immediately on the signing of the treaty, and kept him there a close prisoner. But as soon as ever the pope began his crusade against the Colonnas, in flagrant breach of his faith, the Cardinal Pompeo made urgent and repeated application to Don Ugo to have the hostage given up to him, that he might put him to death. One of the arguments which he used to induce him to do so is worth telling. Francis I., who after the battle of Pavia had become Charles V.'s prisoner,

and had been taken to Madrid, had recently been restored to liberty on signing a treaty, and leaving his sons in hostage with Charles as pledges for its fulfilment. Now, under these circumstances, argued the Cardinal Colonna, nothing could be more judicious, or more useful to the emperor's interest, than putting to death a hostage whose principal had broken his faith.[1] It would act as an admirable hint to Francis to mind what he was about, and tend more than anything else could do to keep him to his engagements with Charles.

Don Ugo, however, who had not the same reason for passionate anger as the persecuted Colonnas, seems from jealousy of his own authority over the prisoner, who was given into his keeping, to have demurred to giving him up. And while his hesitation lasted, Filippo, that 'innocent lamb,' hit upon a scheme for saving himself, appeasing the Colonnas, and punishing his dear friend Clement at one blow.

Having managed to obtain means of communication with two Florentine exiles then in Naples, he sent them to the cardinal with proposals to the effect, that if he were suffered to go free and return to Florence, he could cause that city to revolt against the Medici, and secure its adherence to the emperor. The Cardinal Colonna's anger was of course against Clement, and not against Strozzi; and this scheme promised not only to gratify his indignation, but to be the means of strengthening very considerably the emperor's party in Italy. The Colonna therefore jumped at the proposition, and immediately used all his interest with Don Ugo to obtain Strozzi's liberty.

And it is probable that Strozzi was promising no more than he was able to perform. For discontent and dis-

[1] Vita di F. Strozzi. Edit. cit., p. xli.

affection had been growing rapidly of late in Florence, under the rule of Clement's governor Silvio Passerini, the Cardinal of Cortona, as he was called, from his birthplace. Such men as Pope Clement always get badly served by the subordinates in whom they put their confidence. Their policy is to employ creatures rather than friends. Despotic by temper, and false by principle as well as by nature, they seek only for blind unreasoning obedience to orders; and fearing in their instruments not incapacity but treason, they think it prudence to guard against the latter by employing men whose fate appears to be linked with their own, and whose ruin must follow their own fall. And servants chosen upon these principles are not likely to be of a high class of either intelligence or character.

Such a creature of Clement was this Silvio Passerini, Cardinal of Cortona. Varchi says of him that, 'besides being extremely avaricious, *like most prelates*, he had neither intellect to understand the Florentine character, nor judgment to have managed it if he had comprehended it.' All his care was by vigilant spying to know all that was going on in the city, and by every sort of newly imagined tax to squeeze as much as possible out of the citizens. Disaffection to the government had therefore grown to a perilous height, even among those who were traditional adherents of the Medici, 'since, now-a-days,' says Varchi, 'there is nothing that touches every man so closely, and makes him feel so sorely, as calling upon him to disburse cash.' Now-a-days, says honest Varchi, three hundred years ago!

It is likely enough, therefore, that Strozzi might have succeeded if he had dared to set boldly about it, in making a revolution in Florence. But it so turned out that another sudden sharp turn in Clement's tortuous policy changed the position of the pieces on the political

board, and made it unnecessary for Filippo to play so bold a game.

While the negotiation with the Cardinal Colonna and Don Ugo was going on, the pope entered into a treaty with the viceroy of Naples, which once more made him the emperor's friend; and, as a consequence, liberated Strozzi unconditionally.

Unlike his bolder wife, prudent Filippo had no idea of coming unnecessarily to an open quarrel with the pope, notwithstanding all the legitimate ground of complaint he had against him. His Puritan biographer brother mentions, indeed, that he hated Clement, lest it should be supposed that he was so meek-spirited as not to feel the injury done him; but adds, that he kept his hatred secret, lest his reputation for prudence might be endangered. He hastened to Rome, therefore, and at his first interview with Clement, instead of looking for excuses from him, only thought of excusing himself for those conferences at Naples with Florentine rebels. '*For*' the fact that he had been in communication with them was, as his brother remarks, known to everybody, and it was useless to deny it. The prudent man, however, endeavoured to make the pope believe that he had only sought to use their influence to appease the anger of Cardinal Colonna; and trusted, but without being able to attain any certainty upon the point, that Clement had heard nothing of the means by which the Colonna rage was to have been soothed. Clement was, if good at nothing else, a match for any man living at a game of dissimulation; and accordingly received Filippo with every appearance of cordiality, though Varchi assures us, superfluously enough, that Clement hated Strozzi, while the reciprocity of the sentiment is abundantly guaranteed by the biographer of the latter.

But events of a far graver and more disastrous character than any which Pope Clement or Filippo Strozzi had yet had to deal with were now close at hand.

The Constable Bourbon, whom the gross injustice of Francis I., and the intolerable persecution of his infamous mother, Louise de Savoye, had driven to abandon his country and allegiance, and to offer his services and great military talents to Charles V., and who had largely contributed to win for his new master the great battle of Pavia, was now marching southwards with the imperial troops to chastise the different members of the league against the emperor, which Clement, as we have seen, had formed. George Frundsberg, a German leader of reputation, had also crossed the Alps with fifteen thousand men, 'all Lutherans and Lanzknechts'—as the Italian historians write with horror and dismay—and had joined these forces to the Spaniards under Bourbon. The 'Lanzighinetti,' or 'Lanzi' for short, as the Italian authors write the, to them, strange and dreadful word, Lutherans as they were, appear to have been no whit more or less savage, lawless, and ferocious than their Spanish Catholic fellow-soldiers. The combined force was in all respects more like a rabble rout of brigands and bandits than an army; and was assuredly such as must, even in those days, have been felt to be a disgrace to any sovereign permitting them to call themselves his soldiers. Their pay was, as often was the case with the troops of Charles V., hopelessly in arrear, and discipline was of course proportionably weak among them. Indeed, it seemed every now and then on the point of coming to an end altogether. The two generals had the greatest difficulty in preventing their army from becoming an entirely anarchical and disorganized mob of freebooters, as dangerous to its masters as to everybody else. Of course, food, raiment, and

shelter were the first absolute *sine quâ non* essentials for keeping this dangerous mass of armed men in any degree of order and organization. And, in fact, the present march of Frundsberg and Bourbon had the obtaining of these necessaries for its principal and true object.

The progress southwards of this bandit army, unchecked by any opposing force (for Giovanni delle Bande Nere had lost his life in an attempt to prevent them from passing the Po; and after the death of that great captain, the army of the league did not muster courage to attack or impede the invaders in any way), filled the cities exposed to their attack with terror and dismay. They had passed like a destroying locust-cloud over Bologna and Imola, and crossing the Apennines, which separate Umbria from Tuscany, descended into the valley of the Arno, not far from Arezzo. Florence and Rome both trembled. On which would the storm burst? That was the all-absorbing question.

Pope Clement, with his usual avarice-blinded imbecility, had, immediately on concluding the above-mentioned treaty with the Neapolitan viceroy, discharged all his troops except a body-guard of about six hundred men. Florence was nearly in as defenceless a position. She had, says Varchi, 'two great armies on her territory; one, that under Bourbon, which came as an enemy to sack and plunder her; and the other, that of the league, which came as a friend to protect her, but sacked and plundered her none the less.' It was, however, probably the presence of this army, little as it had hitherto done to impede the progress of the enemy, which decided Bourbon and Frundsberg eventually to determine on marching towards Rome.

It seems doubtful how far they were in so doing executing the orders or carrying out the wishes of the

emperor. Clement, though he had played the traitor to Charles, as he did to every one else, and had been at war with him recently, had now entered into a treaty with the emperor's viceroy. And, apart from this, there was a degree of odium and scandal attaching to the sight of the 'most Catholic' emperor sending a Lutheran army in his pay to attack the head of the Church, and ravage the venerated capital of Christendom, which so decorous a sovereign as Charles would hardly have liked to incur. Still it may be assumed, that if the emperor wished his army kept together, and provided no funds for the purpose, he was not unwilling that they should live by plunder. And perhaps his real intention was to extort from Rome the means of paying his troops by the mere exhibition of the danger arising from their propinquity while they remained unpaid. Upon the whole, we are warranted in supposing that Bourbon and Frundsberg would hardly have ventured on the course they took if they had not had reason to believe that it would not much displease their master. And Charles was exactly that sort of man who would like to have the profit of an evil deed without the loss of reputation arising from the commission of it; and who would consider himself best served by agents who would commit a profitable atrocity without being guilty of the annoying want of tact of waiting for his direct orders to commit it.

For the especial business in hand it was impossible, moreover, to have had two more fitting agents than Bourbon and Frundsberg. It was not every knightly general in those days who would have accepted the task, even with direct orders, of marching to the sack of Rome and the open defiance of its sacred ruler. A Florentine, or a Neapolitan soldier might have had small scruple in doing so; and a Roman baron—a Colonna, or an Orsini—none

at all. For in the case of a pope, more than in any other, 'tis distance lends enchantment to the view.' In all ages the reverence for the papacy has been in inverse proportion to the distance of its disciples from the throne of their ghostly sovereign. Even as at the present day it is in that distant western isle, which the old times deemed to be cut off from the rest of the world by its remoteness, that the authority and prestige of the Roman pontiff is more intact and vigorous than among any less remote community; so in the sixteenth century, when the Alps were the veil which screened the grand-lama-like vicegerent of heaven from the too close examination of his worshippers, there would have been found few men of such mark as Bourbon, in either France or Spain, willing to have undertaken the enterprise he was now engaged in. But the unfortunate constable was a disgraced and desperate man. He was disgraced in the face of Europe by the unknightly breach of his fealty to his sovereign, dispite the intensity of the provocation which had driven him to that step. For all the sanctions which held European society together in the universal bondage, which alone then constituted social order, were involved in maintaining the superstition that so branded him. And he was desperate in his fortune, for though no name in all Europe was at that day as great a military power at the head of a host as that of Bourbon, and though the miserable bearer of it had been so shortly before one of the wealthiest and largest territorial nobles of France, yet the great constable had now his sword for his fortune as barely as the rawest lad in the rabble rout that followed him, sent out to carve his way from some landless tower of an impoverished knight in half-starved Galicia or poverty-stricken Navarre. Bourbon therefore led his unpaid and mutinous hordes to a deed which none knew

better than he would shock and scandalize all Europe, as a man who, having fallen already so low as to have lost all self-respect, cares not in his reckless despair to what depths he plunges.

As for Frundsberg, he was a mere soldier of fortune, whose world was his camp, whose opinions and feelings were formed in quite another school from those of his fellow-general; whose code of honour and of morals was a different one, and whose conscience was not only perfectly at rest respecting the business he was bound on, but approved of it as a good deed and meritorious work for the advancement of true religion. He carried round his neck a halter of golden tissue, we are told,[1] with which he loudly boasted he would hang the pope as soon as he got to Rome; and had others of crimson silk at his saddle-bow, which he said were destined for the cardinals.

Too late Clement became aware of the imminence and magnitude of the danger that threatened him and the capital of Christendom. He besought the viceroy, who had recently signed a treaty with him, as has been seen, to exert himself, and use his authority to arrest the southward march of Bourbon's army. And it is remarkable that this representative of the emperor in the government of Naples did, as it would seem, endeavour earnestly to avert the coming avalanche from the eternal city. While the emperor's viceroy used all his authority and endeavours to arrest the advance of the emperor's army, the emperor's generals advanced and sacked Rome in despite of him. Which of them most really acted according to the secret wishes of that profound dissembler and most false and crafty monarch, it is impossible to know. It may have been that Bourbon himself had no power to stay the plundering bandit-like march of his hungry and unpaid

[1] Varchi, Stor. Fiorent., p. 110. Edit. cit.

troops. And the facts recorded of the state of discipline of the army are perfectly consistent with such a supposition.

The viceroy sent a messenger to Bourbon while he was yet in Bologna, informing him of the treaty signed with Clement, and desiring him therefore to come no further southward. Bourbon, bent, as Varchi says, on deceiving both the pope and the viceroy, replied, that if the pope would send him two hundred thousand florins for distribution to the army, he would stay his march. But while this answer was carried back to Rome the tumultuous host continued its fearfully menacing advance; and the alarm in Rome was rapidly growing to desperate terror. At the pope's earnest request, the viceroy, 'who knew well,' says Varchi, 'that his holiness had not a farthing,' himself took post, and rode hard for Florence with letters from Clement, in the hope of obtaining the money there.

The departure of the viceroy in person, and the breathless haste of his ride post to Florence, speak vividly of the urgency of the case, and of the Spanish officer's personal anxiety respecting the dreadful fate which threatened Rome. But the Florentines do not seem to have been equally impressed with the necessity of losing no time in making an effort to avert the calamity from a rival city. It was 'after much talking,' we are told, that they at last consented to advance a hundred and fifty thousand florins, eighty thousand in cash down, and the remainder by the end of October. It was now April; and Bourbon had by this time crossed the Apennine, and was with his army on the lower western slopes of the mountain, not far from the celebrated monastery of Lavernia. Thither the viceroy hurried with all speed, accompanied by only two servants and a trumpeter, and having with much difficulty, says Varchi, come to speech

with the general, proffered him the eighty thousand florins. Upon which he was set upon by the tumultuous troops, and 'narrowly escaped being torn to pieces by them.' In endeavouring to get away from them, and make his way back to Florence, he fell into the hands of certain peasants near Camaldoli, and was here again in danger of his life, and was wounded in the head. He was, however, rescued by a monk of Vallombrosa, and by him conducted to the neighbouring little town of Poppi, in the Casentino, or upper valley of the Arno, from whence he made his way to Sienna, and so back to Rome, with no pleasant tidings of what might be expected from Bourbon and his brigand army.

The Vallombrosan monk, who thus bestead the viceroy at his need, was, as Varchi records, rewarded by the bishopric of Muro, in the kingdom of Naples, which, adds the historian, he still holds.

The fate of Rome was now no longer doubtful. Clement, who by his penny-wise parsimony had left himself defenceless, made a feeble and wholly vain attempt to put the city in a state of defence. The corrupt and cowardly citizens could not have opposed any valid resistance to the ruffian hordes who were slowly but surely, like an advancing conflagration, coming upon them, even had they been willing to do their best. But the trembling pope's appeal to them to defend the walls fell on the ears of as sorely trembling men, each thinking only of the possible chances of saving his own individual person.

On came the strangely heterogeneous rout of lawless soldiery, leaving behind them a trail of burned and ruined cities, devastated fields, and populations plague-stricken from the contamination engendered by the multitude of their unburied dead.

The remainder of the terrible story of the sack of Rome is well known, and needs not to be repeated. Blood-stained and calamitous as is the all too slowly improving tone of European history, its records do not contain many such scenes as were enacted during that fair May month on those disastrously storied seven hills.

And with what visage did the most Catholic emperor receive the victorious chieftains who had added to the imperial laurels the lustre of this achievement? It would have been interesting to mark the conduct of the circumspect Charles in this matter. But the emperor was saved from the embarrassment he might have felt, and we are deprived of the light which his reception of his generals might have afforded us by the deaths of both of them. Frundsberg was carried off by a fit of apoplexy while striving to quell a mutiny among his troops, before he reached Rome. And Bourbon, as is well known, perished in scaling the walls of the city.

The pope, among his futile and feeble measures for preparing for the storm that was breaking over him, had ordered that no soul should be allowed to quit Rome. But Clarice, on pretext of her state of health, obtained a special permission for herself and husband to go forth. They passed out from the doomed city on the 4th of May; and received news of the taking of it on the 6th, when they were at Civita Vecchia.

CHAPTER VIII.

Filippo's gains and losses.—News of the sack of Rome at Florence.—State of that city.—Filippo master of the political situation.—Causes of his great influence.—Principles of historical judgments.—Filippo's doubts and hesitation.—He sends his wife to Florence.—Character of Clarice.—The 'Ottimati.'—The Cardinal of Cortona, the 'Crà di Piccadiglio.'—Clarice at the Palazzo Medici.—Filippo comes to Florence.—Mediæval and modern value of personal courage.—Filippo's interview with the Medici.—Decision of the Great Council.—Clarice again.—The Medici, accompanied by Filippo, quit the city.

FILIPPO STROZZI and his wife passed by sea from Civita Vecchia to Pisa, and remained there in tranquillity and safety, while all the doomed city from which they had escaped was suffering the unspeakable complication of horrors which lawless war, pestilence, famine, and total anarchy combined to let loose upon it. Infinite cause for that self-congratulation, which in natures of Strozzi's stamp takes the place of thankfulness, had he and Clarice in the timely prudence and good management which had at that critical moment enabled them to quit the sinking ship. But it is not to be supposed that the wealthy banker and merchant had not, as it was, cause enough for trouble and anxiety. And it is impossible that such a financial business as he was at the head of should traverse such a social cataclysm without suffering heavy losses, both in his own proper person and by means of the ruin of debtors and clients of the bank. In a curious

document, entitled 'Extraordinary expenses incurred by me from 1526 till the present time, as far as I can remember, for I am sure that I forget many,' printed from the original in Strozzi's handwriting, among the illustrations to Niccolini's tragedy of Filippo Strozzi, by Signor Pietro Bigazzi, is the following entry:—'For losses by the sack of Rome I name no sum, though I should think that loss cannot be estimated less than many thousands of crowns.' But we hear nothing from his biographer of his special losses upon this occasion, though in general he gives us abundant notice of the great expenses and losses which his brother had to meet; and we never hear anything, beyond a general admission of the profitable nature of his office of treasurer, of his gains. So that the general impression left on the reader's mind is, remembering that after all he left an immense property behind him, that the sums of money made by him must have been vast indeed. His escape from the hands of Don Ugo di Moncada and the Cardinal Pompeo Colonna, when he was left in the lurch by Clement, had cost him fifty thousand crowns. We have constant mention of the sums which he had to advance to his apostolic clients; and as the story goes on we shall meet with thick-coming losses on a very large scale. We hear, in short, lamentations over ruin enough to have overwhelmed a dozen strong capitalists; and yet prudent Filippo continues to the end a very wealthy man. His purse truly seems like that of Fortunatus: there was no exhausting it.

The entire life of this cautious statesman and financier may be characterized as a continuous walk upon a political tight-rope, with ever-present danger of falling on one side or the other. Nothing but the most cautious and masterly balancing could have enabled him to perform this feat for many successive years. Of course the most

even temper, perfect self-control, an absence of all strong party-feeling, a universal scepticism, which believed only in the infallibility of the multiplication table, the indefeasible power of cash, and the possibility of juggling wrong into the place of right for good and all, or at all events with sufficient finality to answer all purposes to the prudent juggler; of course all this was absolutely necessary to the successful performance of the feat. And it is curious to mark the operation of these qualities and the 'success' attending it.

The events described at the end of the last chapter brought about a state of circumstances which tried Filippo's rope-balancing powers to the utmost; never had he more need of wary walking than in those days succeeding the terrible calamity of Rome. But he rose equal to the occasion, and calls forth the strongly-expressed admiration of his biographer Lorenzo accordingly.

The news of the taking by assault and sack of Rome did not reach Florence till the 12th of May, having thus taken six days to travel a distance of little more than two hundred miles. It is one of the very rare instances on record of tidings of great interest and public notoriety travelling more slowly than could have been expected: the reverse is generally the case to a very extraordinary degree. And this exception to the general rule represents to us, perhaps more vividly than any other circumstance, the utter desolation which had been caused by the march of Bourbon's army, and that total cutting off of one district from another, by which a continuation of wars was reducing the country to a state of barbarism, as rapidly as increased facility of intercommunication forces forward civilization.

The tidings, when they at last reached Florence, produced a very violent effect, though scarcely of the kind a

nineteenth-century reader might anticipate. All that we have so constantly heard about the municipal rivalries and enmities, that caused Italian mediæval patriotism to be ever bounded by city walls, is hardly enough to prepare us for hearing that the news of Rome's calamity was 'most grateful to the Florentines.' It is the Florentine historian Varchi who assures us that it was so. 'Never,' adds he, 'was chastisement so tremendous inflicted; nor was it ever more richly deserved.' But the truth is, that it was not hatred of Rome so much as hatred of Rome's sovereign and their own, Clement, which made the Florentines rejoice in the tremendous calamity which had befallen both. Rome's misfortune was the Tuscan city's opportunity. Clement was a prisoner in the castle of St. Angelo; and now or never was the time for Florence once again to free herself from the detested Medici.

Already, before the news arrived, the city, under the weak yet violent government of the Cardinal of Cortona, had been manifesting symptoms very disquieting to its masters. The picture drawn in a few words by Varchi of the state of things in those days is strikingly suggestive.

'Florence,' says he, 'remained the prey and the scorn of those soldiers whose duty it was to protect it. It is impossible for any one, however lively his imagination may be, to picture to himself the immeasurable gloom and sadness that weighed both on the city and on the country around it. The latter had been plundered and laid waste not less by those who professed to be our friends than by our enemies. In the former, more military jerkins than citizens' cloaks were to be seen; there were more arms than men; and it seemed as if those who passed in the streets dared not lift up their eyes, partly in shame, and partly in fear, and from utter distrust, not only of every other man, but even of themselves. The drums were

continually making their rounds; there was no hour of day or night without turning out of the guards, or patrols of soldiers. At every slightest disorder, if it were but the falling of a pike on the pavement, or if more than three men stood together, or if two talked together at all earnestly, the soldiers ran to the spot to warn and threaten them. Then in a moment a tumult would arise, and the shops would be closed in all haste, and the citizens would run as if in terror, and shut themselves into their houses.'[1]

Such was the state of Florence when the citizens heard that their tyrant was a prisoner in his own castle of St. Angelo. It was already known in Florence that Filippo Strozzi had arrived in Pisa; and the eyes of all parties in the city, in the surging tumult and confusion that immediately arose, turned towards him as having more power than any other man to restore tranquillity by assuring the ascendency of one or the other party. Messengers were despatched to him in all haste, both by the Cardinal of Cortona, who counted on him as an assured supporter of the Medici, and by Niccolò Capponi, who was his brother-in-law, and who, as leader of that part of the aristocracy which wished to restore constitutional liberty to Florence, without conceding all the demands of the radical party, trusted that Strozzi would join them in throwing off the yoke of that family.

There is no incident in Filippo's life which more strongly marks the high consideration and great influence he enjoyed in his native city. It attributes a degree of importance to these which seems out of proportion to what we have been led to expect from all that we have hitherto seen of his public life. He was at this time one of the richest, perhaps the richest citizen in Florence; he was

[1] Varchi, Stor. Fior. tom. i. p. 163. Edit. cit.

(not by birth; for, as we have seen, he was a younger son; but, curiously enough, by general estimation and consent, as it should seem; for we have nowhere any syllable of explanation of the circumstance) the representative of an old and much-respected Florentine name; he was connected with the Medici by marriage, and with their opponents by the marriage of his sister. His conduct on the occasion of the last Medicean restoration had been very equivocal; his subsequent intimacy with the worthless tyrant Lorenzo had been anything but creditable; his private conduct was more than lax—was, indeed, so bad as to call forth the special reprehension of historians in that very lax and little-expecting epoch; he was to a fair degree a scholar, and lover of literature and learning; and he was treasurer and loan contractor to the apostolic court. But nothing of all this would have prepared one, judging according to our notions of things, for finding *him* above all men in Florence the cynosure of all eyes, the selected arbiter, and *Deus ex machinâ* invoked by both parties in the crisis of their struggles and difficulties. Were it, indeed, his brother Lorenzo alone who presented him to posterity in this proud and lofty position, we might be inclined to expect some exaggeration or undue colouring in the representation; but Varchi, whose testimony is always of great weight, and is on this point unimpeachable, gives a completely similar account of the facts of the case; and represents Filippo to have been at that time looked up to by all parties as well-nigh 'master of the situation,' quite as fully as does Lorenzo's more partial narrative.

What was it, then, that his fellow-citizens saw in Filippo Strozzi to produce this universal deference, and to attribute to him so great an influence? The question is worth asking; for the answer to it will help much in

enabling the reader to form a just conception of the general tone of moral and social sentiment prevailing among these people at this their critical and seething 'renaissance' time;—time, that is, of the death of the old turbulent, violent, confused system of ill-understood and worse practised liberty, which, with all its faults, was yet above all else a time of movement, and therefore one of hope and at least possibility of progress; and of the new birth, which was to succeed it, of a system of orderly, regularly-constituted tyranny, which, stagnant and death-stricken from its birth, made all hope and all progress impossible. The great and grand virtue which drew on Filippo Strozzi all the eyes and all the hopes of his countrymen, was that same which chiefly, almost exclusively, claims the admiration and panegyric of his loving biographer, which he harps on again and again, and which in all the writers of the time is extolled as the quality *par excellence* which it becomes a man to acquire and practise. It was his acknowledged and tried PRUDENCE. All the trimming, all the well-hidden deceitfulness, all the skilful steering towards an object by tortuous, indirect, and cleverly-masked courses, which would with us mark the man practising them for contempt and avoidance, were in that death-and-renaissance time so many titles to respect and admiration. An enemy foiled by a well-devised take in, an advantage gained by a simulated exhibition of friendliness, a notable triumph in the art of making speech the means of concealing thought,—these were achievements which covered their author with glory, and compelled adherence.

A fearful picture of a state of society! exclaims some readers. And surely these men must be judged with reference to the standard of morality around them! With a system of religion for their sole spiritual teaching as

incredible and much more immoral than that of 'the poor Indian,' what would you have? They know no better. We must 'make allowances.'

Once again, we have nothing to do with judging these men, or making allowances. Filippo Strozzi does not offer himself as candidate to represent our borough; nor even ask us to take him by the hand. As well might the *post-mortem* examiner, who finds that the subject before him was killed by ossification of the heart, be asked to 'make allowances' for the heart, in consideration of the general weaknesses of the constitution. The 'subject' whose case we are studying was killed by the diseases which the examination reveals to us. This is the only fact of real value that we obtain from the consideration of his case. The often-urged reflection, that 'we might perhaps have acted similarly under similar circumstances,' though all important when stated as the unerring result of moral law in the absolute formula—'we should infallibly do the same thing, and think the same thoughts, if subjected to the same influences'—is altogether irrelevant when put forward as a plea for a modified ethical judgment of an individual as a responsible moral being. For we have happily no such judgment to pronounce. But the whole value of history lies in that certainty that similar moral causes will produce similar moral effects. The social, political, and religious environment in which we observe this poor deceased Filippo and the rest of them around him to have lived, *did* form and mould them into such semblance as we see. The inhabitants of such and such a district are made bloated crétins by the malaria in which they live. What caused the moral atmosphere in the one case, and the physical atmosphere in the other to be deadly? *This* is the only point on which we have to exercise our judgment.

Never had Strozzi greater need to exercise his 'prudence' than in dealing with the rival applications from his fellow-citizens, which his reputation for prudence had brought upon him. The conjuncture was undeniably a difficult one.

The pope—the only Medici of the elder branch, save two lads, and the little girl, Catherine, afterwards Queen of France—was the prisoner of lawless soldiers in Saint Angelo. He was at deadly feud with the emperor. The fortunes of that monarch were strongly in the ascendant over those of Francis of France. Florence, long heaving with ill-suppressed anger and rebellion, was ready for any howsoever violent a move in a popular and democratic direction. No dangerous opposition was to be feared on the one hand, and no efficient assistance to be hoped on the other from the feeble and frightened Cardinal of Cortona. Nothing would have been easier at the moment than for Filippo Strozzi to have placed himself at the head of a popular movement, which would assuredly for the nonce have carried all before it. And many men might have deemed it the safest as well as the easiest and most tempting course to take.

But Filippo had little trust in the constancy of Florentine popular sentiment, and much in the constancy of Medicean ambition. He counted much on the vitality of papal power, and little on any quarrel between pope and emperor to the profit of popular freedom. For he knew that it is in the nature of popes and emperors to be friends when either of them is in contest with the people, and clearly understood that that many-headed monster was the real never-changing foe, against whom both pope and emperor must wage an unintermitting war, equally necessary to both of them. In a word, Filippo Strozzi could tell of more than one Medicean restoration, and

was quite aware of the great possibility that he might live to see another.

On the other hand, would it be prudent, would it be even safe to enter Florence in its present humour as an avowed supporter of the Medici? Such a course in the present juncture would assuredly make him the most unpopular man in the city for the time being, and might even expose to danger all the vast property he owned there. Besides, he knew the Medici, and especially Clement, well enough to be quite sure that no compensating gratitude was to be looked for from them, whenever the turn in the tide of their fortunes should take place, if he were to decide on playing the waiting game for their restoration.

Again, there was another difficulty in the way of adopting either of these courses frankly and decidedly. The great anti-Medicean nobles, who may be compared to our great Whig families, were anxious to get rid of that overshadowing upas-tree of a family, but were by no means anxious to favour such a radical revolution as should throw political power into the hands of the people. This party, who were called the "Ottimati"—the "Aristocracy," that is; merely turning Latin into Greek—wished, in fact, to establish an oligarchy much on the model of that of Venice. And Filippo, by birth, by old family connection, and by position in the city, naturally belonged to this party. But they were exposed to a twofold danger—one immediate, from popular violence—and one prospective, from Medicean vengeance.

Prudent Filippo paused at Pisa much perplexed and much pondering. The more impulsive and frank-hearted Clarice would have set aside all such hesitation. The burning hatred she felt for Clement was enough to decide the line of conduct *she* would have had her husband

adopt. She loudly complained to all who cared to hear her, that 'Clement had robbed her of her property when cardinal, and of her flesh and blood when pope;' alluding, by the latter charge, to the scurvy trick he had played her 'lamb-like' husband in the hostage matter. Clarice would have had her husband proceed to Florence at once, and use the opportunity for wreaking vengeance on false, fleeting, perjured Clement to the utmost.

The determination ultimately arrived at by Strozzi was a characteristic one, and is characteristically applauded by his brother. Instead of venturing forward into the disturbed city himself, he determined to send his wife. He decided that she should 'try the difficult ford' first. And both Varchi and Lorenzo Strozzi use this same metaphor in speaking of the same circumstance. His object in this, as his brother exultingly explains, was twofold. In the first place, he avoided the danger that 'the Medici, finding him at Florence without being on their side, might suddenly assassinate him. And in the second place, he gained the advantage of being able, if need were hereafter, 'to excuse himself to the pope by throwing all the blame upon his wife.'

What a prudent Filippo!

Clarice, on her part, made not the least objection to this arrangement. She had ever shown herself 'high-minded beyond what was prudent,' says Lorenzo; and she was well contehted to be permitted to carry out her own views for wreaking her vengeance on the pope.

The fearless lady, accordingly, leaving her prudent husband safe in hiding at Pisa, and undertaking to send for him when she should have sufficiently sounded the ground and prepared the way for him, so that her 'innocent lamb' might run no danger, departed on the mission.

Her first care was to seek a private interview on the evening of her arrival with Niccolò Capponi, the brother-in-law of Filippo, and the principal leader of the 'Ottimati,' or patrician oligarchical party. Some others of the leaders of the party were admitted to this secret sitting, in which Clarice, far more violently and frankly than her husband in all probability would have approved, exhorted them to go all lengths in expelling the Medici, and promised her own and her husband's entire adhesion and co-operation. Niccolò Capponi had been for some time past secretly exciting the people, and preparing them for an outbreak. But the game he and his peers, the other anti-Medicean nobles, had to play was a delicate one, and required cautious handling. The Medici could not be turned out without the aid of the popular element. It was necessary to make common cause with the populace, and adopt their tone and their watchwords. But the objects of these great Florentine Whigs and that of the people were in fact very different. 'Liberty' was the cry, to a certain extent sincere, of both the malcontent sections of the people, for both were equally deprived of it by the Medici. But the patricians wanted it only for themselves, while the people, more ignorant even than the nobles of the real nature and meaning of civil liberty, wanted to share with them the power and privileges in which they deemed it to consist. It was the old, old story. The problem was to use the brute power of the masses as a cat's-paw for drawing the chestnuts of power, place, and profit from the Medicean fire. But the cat was a tiger, whose paws it was considerably dangerous to trifle with, especially as the Florentine public was quite sufficiently versed in the mysteries of political life to be quite awake to the danger of being tricked, and vigilantly suspicious of the slightest symptom of treason to the popular cause.

The brute force of the masses, however, played on this occasion a less all-important part than is usually the case in similar circumstances. For the historians agree in the opinion that the Cardinal of Cortona had quite sufficient military force within the city to have quelled all tendency to revolt by the strong hand, if he had possessed the courage and promptitude to use it.[1] Much, therefore, depended on cowing and frightening this man, who was, according to all the writers, utterly inefficient and incapable. He had already committed a serious error in permitting the great council of citizens to assemble in the grand old hall of the 'Palazzo Publico.' Their tone at once became ominously menacing. And when the cardinal, alarmed by it, would have made some feeble attempt at opposing to their growing violence a military force, he found that the troops would do nothing without their pay down in cash. The cardinal sent for the city treasurer, who was in fact a mere deputy of Filippo Strozzi, who held that office in Florence as well as in Rome. This deputy had by private order from Filippo deposited the public chest with its contents in the house of Lorenzo Strozzi, Filippo's brother and biographer; whereupon the cashier told the cardinal that he had no money in hand. The cardinal governor maintained that he must have funds. High words ensued; and the treasurer 'made a ribald gesture at the cardinal, and said, "take that," and then went off to Lucca.' Honest Varchi reprobates the brutality of the act in no measured terms, and gibbets this cashier, whose name was 'Francesco del Nero, nicknamed the Crà del Piccadiglio,' as 'the most irreligious and sordidly avaricious man ever born in Florence.'[2]

Bacio Valori, a firm partisan of the Medici, counselled

[1] Segni, Storie Fiorentine, lib. i. tom. i. p. 13. Edit. Milano, 1805.
[2] Varchi. Edit. cit., tom. i. p. 170.

the insulted cardinal to arrest Niccolò Capponi at once. And Count Piernoferi da Montedoglio, the captain of the guard, advised him to put his hand in his own amply filled purse; declaring that if he would come forward with only twenty thousand crowns for the soldiers, he would undertake to put down all disturbance, and hold the city for the Medici against all opposition. But the cardinal was too timid to follow the first, and too avaricious to accept the second of these counsels.[1] So while the citizens were openly assembling in defiance of him under his nose, and the leaders of the evidently imminent insurrection were sitting in secret conclave, he, with the two young Medici in his charge, Ippolito and Alessandro, now lads of sixteen, was sitting helpless in the Palazzo Medici, waiting for some favourable turn, the principal hope of which hung on the message he had sent to Filippo Strozzi.

Such was the state of matters in Florence when Clarice arrived and took her place at the council-board of the insurgent nobles. It was arranged that she should wait on the cardinal at the Palazzo Medici the next morning. And the minute account which the historians Varchi and Segni have given of the lady's visit to the then occupiers of her ancestral home, shows abundantly that no better agent could have been selected for completing the poor cardinal's panic, and absolutely frightening him out of the city.

When she arrived in her litter the next morning at the Medicean palace—that magnificent pile of building, which is now known as the Palazzo Riccardi, and which every one who has been in Florence will remember at the bottom of the Via Larga—Ippolito, with his tutor, the Cardinal Ridolfi, met her on the stairs, and conducted her to the cardinal governor, who received her in the

[1] Segni. Edit. cit., tom. i. p. 13.

room next the chapel—a magnificent saloon, now cut up by partitions for the convenience of some of the many offices which in these days are harboured in the grand old palace, and of which only the gorgeously-gilded and richly-moulded ceiling remains to testify to its former splendour. The cardinal, trusting that she came to reinforce him, and not his enemies, rose to receive her. But Clarice left him no longer in doubt.

'My lord! my lord!' cried she, 'to what a pass have you brought us!' In the midst of her anger and violence, Filippo's wife was politic enough, it will be observed, to affect to consider herself, as a Medici, a sharer in the present troubles of the family. As such she would naturally have more influence with the governor. 'Is this, your conduct, do you think,' she continued, 'in any way similar to that which my ancestors were wont to practise?'

Varchi assures us that he has been particularly careful to give the exact words she used, because it had been said that she had abused the cardinal and the two young men with grossly injurious and unbecoming language, which was not the case.

'Her ancestors,' she went on, 'had been powerful in Florence, because such had been the will of the citizens. They had on more than one occasion absented themselves from the city in obedience to the popular will, and had returned when it had pleased the people to recall them. Such, in her opinion, should be their conduct now. It was evidently necessary to conform themselves to the condition of the times, seeing the position in which the pope found himself. And as for you,' she continued, turning to the young men, 'trust me you had better provide for your own safety, which I have naturally more at heart than this cardinal here.'

'The cardinal made many attempts to interrupt her, trying to get in a word of excuse,' says Varchi; 'but she never let him say a syllable, continually vociferating over and over again the same words.' Segni observes that the lady was endowed with a wonderful power of tongue. Francesco Vettori, Niccolò Capponi, Baccio Valori, and several other citizens of note who had come in, tried to interpose between the eloquent dame and the overwhelmed cardinal; and there was a good deal of confusion, in the midst of which the report of a shot was suddenly heard. It was supposed afterwards that it was fired by our old harebrained acquaintance, Prinzivalle della Stufa, though for what purpose is not clear. At all events, it had the effect of breaking up the meeting, and Clarice retired to the neighbouring house of the Ginori.

Thence she immediately wrote to her husband, urging him to come on to Florence without delay; telling him that everything was going on admirably, and that his presence only was wanted to complete the work. She did not mention in her letter the incident of the shot fired, either not thinking it of any importance, or else knowing her husband well enough to fear that it might awaken his 'prudence.' The circumstance, however, had induced her to send her children who were with her in Florence out to a villa belonging to Strozzi, called Le Selve, near Signa, on the road to Pisa. And it so chanced that Filippo, coming up thence to Florence, met them on the road with their tutor. Inquiring from them the reason of their quitting the city, he heard the story of crack-brained Prinzivalle's shot, whereupon prudent Filippo immediately stopped short, and determined not to venture into the city that night, but to sleep at a place called Legnaia, about two miles on that side of it.

The next morning, however, having been reassured by

several of the party who went out to meet him at Legnaia, he ventured to come on to Florence, where he was received with the utmost marks of respect and welcome. We have the detailed account of these events from three historians,—honest, naïf, liberty-loving Varchi; respectable, grave, scholarly Segni; and Lorenzo Strozzi, the consistent radical and disciple of Savonarola, yet partial and admiring biographer of the younger brother, who so completely eclipsed him as always to have been considered as the representative of the house.[1] And it is worth observing, that no one of these writers, in recording how the great statesman and financier sent his wife among dangers which he would not face himself, and from fear hesitated to rejoin her, even when pressingly summoned by her, manifests the slightest notion that he is telling anything at all derogatory to the character of the great man whose deeds he is narrating; on the contrary, all this excessive care to keep his person out of the reach of possible danger only affords occasion for more of the eternal laudation of his 'prudence.'

It is curious, that in proportion to the comparative rareness of the occasions on which a man living the ordinary life of the nineteenth century is called upon to face personal danger, the general estimate of the value of fearlessness has certainly increased. At first sight the reverse might have been expected, according to the general rule, which makes those things most valued which are most needed. But some higher law has in this instance set the rule aside. It is true that a sixteenth-century Englishman would not probably have related so palpable a case of shrinking from meeting peril as that above told, with the same approval and complacency as the Italian writers cited have done. But he would have tolerated a greater

[1] Note 11.

degree of providential care for personal safety than is now thought compatible with a due habit of manly daring. And the change of sentiment on this point in Italy is at least as great as with us, though the general tone of feeling on the subject is still probably somewhat lower than among ourselves. Is the explanation of the fact to be found in the higher modern appreciation of *duty?* For of course all the value attached to a readiness to meet danger is based theoretically on the supposition that it is done at the call of duty; though as usual, in practice, that which is praiseworthy under given circumstances comes to be deemed admirable in itself.

Filippo was met at the city gates and escorted to his own palace by a large body of the leading men in Florence. He found his house full, says Varchi, of citizens eager to welcome him to Florence, and learn the line of conduct he was disposed to adopt. After a short council held in an inner room with the principal members of his family and political connection, it was decided that he should at once wait on the cardinal governor at the Palazzo Medici; and that he should do so as on an ordinary occasion of a simple visit, unarmed, and accompanied only by his brother Lorenzo. Filippo hesitated much, says Lorenzo, before he would consent to this; thinking that the Medici might very possibly conceive that his death at the present conjuncture would greatly tend to crush the insurrectionary movement, and secure their own position; and that it would be a very easy matter to despatch him when he was in their hands and in their own house. Varchi, too, it is fair to mention, evidently considers that the step was not without danger from this cause. Strozzi trusted much, however, he says, in the persuasion that the cardinal was 'too cowardly' to murder him thus. Both writers, however, seem to forget

that Strozzi had been urged to come to Florence by the Medicean party, and that they had as yet no means of knowing that he might not have done so with the intention of supporting their cause; unless, indeed, it was thought that the conduct of Clarice had been a sufficient indication of her husband's leanings and intentions.

Filippo opened the interview by asking for information respecting the state of things in Florence, pretending to be wholly ignorant of all that had happened, as one just arrived from a distance. The Cardinal of Cortona apparently had not the face to pretend that he believed a word of all this. But young Ippolito, taking it all as simple fact, began to tell Filippo the whole story; how infamously the city was behaving, how sadly precarious their own present position was, how greatly in danger was the whole fabric of Medicean ascendency. He complained bitterly of the conduct of Clarice since she had arrived in Florence, pointing out to her husband how unnaturally she, a Medici, was behaving in thus turning against her own kin, and siding with strangers to her blood. He said that it was entirely owing to her intrigues and violence that they had consented to allow the Great Council to meet and occupy itself with revolutionary projects. But, he added, now that Filippo was come it would be easy to undo all that, if only he were disposed to stand by them and exert himself in their cause in earnest. He finished by reminding him that the day would assuredly come when Medicean gratitude would give him abundant cause to congratulate himself on having helped them in their hour of need.

Filippo replied with the utmost affability and kindness. He expressed great sorrow for all that had occurred in the city; and especially declared himself pained by the ill conduct of Clarice. Had she not been a

Medici, he said, 'he would have so reprimanded her in public, and administered such a chastisement in private, that it would have gone hard with her.' But, he added, with a sigh, the real fact was, that Clarice, feeling herself to be, as one of their blood, far superior in condition to himself, he unhappily had not that amount of control over her that could be wished. Finally, prudent Filippo promised to hasten immediately to the Great Council then sitting, and to see how far it were possible to guide the popular will in such a direction as they would wish.

Strozzi in truth did proceed forthwith to the hall of the Great Council; and found there, as of course he had intended to find, that unfortunately things had already gone too far for it to be safe to attempt then to reverse the decisions which the citizens had come to. His first care was to send a message by a trusty agent to the captain of the guard, to the effect that his services were no longer required at the *Palazzo Publico;* and that he might withdraw his troops. Then he hurried back to the Palazzo Medici, and communicated to the cardinal and the two young men the unsuccessful issue of his endeavours; adding, that seeing that it was too late for there to be any hope of setting aside the resolutions to which the council had come, he had judged it in their interest by no means prudent to risk changing the favourable intentions of the citizens towards them, by advancing any obnoxious pretensions on their behalf. As the resolution to which the Great Council had come now stood, the Medici were not to be exiled, nor cited to give any account of the past, but were to be permitted to leave the city, or to reside in it at their pleasure, on the same terms as any other citizens.

To the two young scions of the Medici who had been brought up to consider themselves as princes, with a

strong sense of the dignity and privileges of such a position, and not a shadow of a conception of its duties and responsibilities, this indulgent permission to live as private citizens in the city they had looked to rule and tax as despots, was gall and wormwood. But there appeared no present possibility of resisting; and, indeed, very significant symptoms began to manifest themselves, which indicated that the temper of the populace, despite the decree of the Great Council, was such as might make it imprudent for them to avail themselves of the permission to remain on any terms in the city. The Florentines, as Varchi says, 'did not feel themselves to be free' as long as any of the detested race were yet in their old lair. They were bent on changing, as they significantly phrased it, 'not the wine only, but the flask too.' The tide of popular feeling was rising very rapidly; and those who best knew Florence and its people, saw that it might very soon become a question whether the young heirs of the Medicean fortunes and hopes might be able to get out of the city in safety.

As for the Cardinal of Cortona, what with personal fears for his own safety, and a sense of the account he would have one day to render to Clement for the management which had allowed matters to come to this pass, he lost all presence of mind, and became even more incapable than ever of judging soundly either for others or himself.

Under these circumstances, Strozzi went again to the Palazzo Medici, to point out to them the condition of matters in the city, and to urge on them the prudence of departing while they were yet free to do so. It may well be believed that prudent, cautious Filippo was really anxious to get them safely out of the city, and to avoid the danger from popular violence which menaced them. Despite all the craft he had used to avoid appearing to be

one of the ringleaders of the revolutionary movement, his influence in the city was too notorious, and his position with respect to the leaders of the insurrection was too evident, for him to escape a heavy portion of the responsibility which would have attached to anything that might have happened to the young men. There is every reason to think, therefore, that he was sincere and earnest in his counsels to them to quit Florence.

But it was difficult to bring them to any decision, and time pressed. Already their departure in safety was a more doubtful and chancy matter than it would have been an hour earlier; for the streets were beginning to be filled with people, more or less hostile to them; and the wind of the popular wrath was evidently rising, and threatened storm. The cardinal and the young men had closeted themselves together in an inner room of the palace, promising that they would give Filippo an answer shortly. But the minutes went on; Filippo was becoming more and more anxious as to the result, and still no answer came.

Filippo shortly grew angry; and, as the best mode of hastening their deliberations, determined to set Clarice on them.

'Clarice!' cried he, to his wife, who was then awaiting the result (it is the historian Segni who has recorded the incident and the words),—'Clarice! it would be well that they should be quick about making up their minds in there; and it is for you to do whatever you deem best to hasten them.'

Careful Filippo did not wish that these princelings should have any harsh words to quote against him hereafter.

Clarice no sooner got this hint from her husband than she went into the room where the old man and the two

young ones were hesitating in an agony of indecision, and 'with a face,' says Segni, 'full of indignation and contempt, and with manly bearing said, raising her voice so that it was heard by those outside: "It would be disgraceful to me, who am a woman, to be thus incapable of coming to a decision to adopt or reject the course which has been proposed to you as the safest, if not, perhaps, the most honourable. The time for consideration was when you were so conducting yourselves as to bring things to this pass. It was not thus that my ancestors ruled and gained the affections of the Florentines; but you, by your conduct, show plainly enough, if it were not known before, that you are not of the blood of the Medici. And I say this, not of you only, but of Pope Clement, wrongfully pope,[1] and most rightfully now prisoner in St. Angelo. The reputation of the family may go to the dogs for me. And for you, go out from a house and from a city neither of which belong to you, either by right of birth or of your own merit. Go! and lose no time in setting about it."'[2]

'The lady Clarice had, as one of the historians remarks, a great power of tongue.

The cardinal and the two lads were, says Segni, so 'overwhelmed by such words so spoken by such a woman,' that they at once professed their willingness to go; only imploring Filippo to see them safe out of the town.

This was no longer altogether an easy thing to undertake. The whole length of the Via Larga lay between the Medici palace and the city gate, and it was now full of a threatening crowd. However, Strozzi and Niccolò Capponi promised to ride with them to the gate. And though, as they passed along the street, more than one

[1] She alludes to the illegitimacy of the young men and of Clement.

[2] Segni. Edit. cit., tom. i. p. 17.

voice was heard, says Varchi, to mutter that the day would come when the Florentines would repent having allowed them to depart alive, they reached the gate unharmed, and rode that night, accompanied by Filippo, to the Medicean villa called Poggio à Caiano, about ten miles from Florence, on the road to Pistoia.

And thus Filippo Strozzi, aged thirty-nine, accompanied the Medici out of Florence, as we have seen him when he was twenty-four accompanying them into the city, contriving on both occasions to reap the profit of being on the winning side without incurring the decided hostility of the losing party.

CHAPTER IX.

Feud at Pistoia.—Strozzi charged by the city to receive the fortresses of Pisa and Leghorn from the Medici.—He is fooled by Ippolito.—Loses credit at Florence.—Suspicious conduct of Clarice.—Filippo decides on retiring into private life.—Consequences of the fall of Florence.—Filippo's scepticism.—Death of Clarice.—Filippo goes to Lyons.—Riots there put down by him.—He visits Vaucluse.—Goes to Genoa.—Has a conference there with Alessandro.—Goes to Lucca, and remains there during the siege of Florence.—His illness.—Lorenzo's account of it;—and his statement of his own conduct.—Honesty the best policy!—Final fall of liberty in Florence.

It was on the 17th of May that the Cardinal of Cortona and the two lads, Ippolito and Alessandro, went forth as we have seen from Florence. Strozzi accompanied them to Poggio à Caiano; and the next day received letters from the city, requesting him to proceed to Pistoia, for the purpose of restoring order there. For in that city, as in most others of the Italian municipalities of that day, the community was divided into two hostile factions, headed by two noble families who handed down the family feud—Montague and Capulet fashion—from one generation to another. In Pistoia, these were the Panciatichi and Cancellieri. And as soon as ever it was known there that Florence was in a state of revolution, the two factions, according to invariable and time-honoured custom on similar opportunities, broke into open violence and civil warfare. Filippo, his brother assures us, by his influence with the heads of either party, and by his conciliatory

talents, succeeded easily in restoring peace to the little city, and was returning from this errand to Poggio à Caiano, when he met on the road the cardinal and the two young Medici. They were going they said to Lucca; seeing that the tidings which reached them of the state of Florence, and of the prevalence of mob violence there, gave them reason to think that they were not in safety so near to the city. Filippo determined on accompanying them to Lucca. Possibly he was in no hurry to return to Florence till the first outburst of popular violence, consequent on the revolution, should have been calmed down.

If such was his motive, his prudence for once got him into much worse trouble then he would probably have been exposed to by returning at once to the city where his interests lay. For at Lucca letters reached him from the magistrates, informing him that the orders which the Medici had, before they were suffered to leave Florence, been compelled to send to the commandants of the fortresses of Pisa and Leghorn, enjoining those officers to give up the places held by them to the republic, had been refused by them. The captains of these strongholds knew, doubtless, perfectly well that they were on this occasion acting most according to the wishes of their masters by disobeying their written orders. But it was important to the republic to have these places in its hands; and the letters to Filippo enjoined him not to lose his hold of the young princes till the fortresses were given up.

The commandant at Pisa had written that he would surrender the place if ordered to do so by Ippolito in person. The regular course, according to the military rules of the time, required that an officer charged with the safe holding of a garrisoned fort should, under no circumstances, obey any order to give it up, unless accompanied by the 'password' arranged between him and his superior.

If this 'open-sesame' were spoken, it would have been their duty to obey, speak the word who might. But the Cardinal of Cortona and the young men asserted that this password was in Clement's own keeping.

Under these circumstances, Filippo took Ippolito with him from Lucca to Pisa, and suffered him to enter the fortress alone, for the purpose of persuading the commandant to give it up.

Meantime, Filippo, with a want of caution wonderful for him, wrote to the magistrates at Florence that they might be quite easy on the matter of the fortresses, for that he was about to receive them from the hands of Ippolito.

That promising young chip of the old Medici block, after some delay, came forth from the fortress, declaring, as might have been expected, that the commander was obstinate, and absolutely refused to obey any order unaccompanied by the proper password. Filippo, however, took the young man to task so severely, and pointed out to him so strongly the probability that he and his family might lose all they possessed in Florence, as well as the hope of ever returning thither, if he persisted in deceiving the republic, that Ippolito at last confessed that the password was in the keeping of one Don Angelo Marzi, who was then in Lucca. And he wrote to that officer, under Strozzi's direction, an order to send him the password by the return of the messenger. When this was despatched the young man 'retired to his chamber, to repose himself.' Filippo then bethought him that it would be well to place a guard around the fortress, to make sure that no fresh force was surreptitiously introduced into it. But as he was too cautious to venture on giving the necessary orders without communicating with the governor of the city, he quitted the house in which Ippolito was 'reposing in his chamber,' for the purpose of conferring with that

authority. The governor gave his ready consent to the proposed step; and Filippo left him to take measures for its execution, when he heard that as soon as ever he had left the house Ippolito had made an end of his siesta, and had quitted Pisa.

Strozzi was bitterly mortified, as his brother admits, at finding himself thus fooled by a boy of sixteen. But the incident had worse results than the mere mortification of his vanity. Florence was, as he well knew, in a very suspicious mood; and he foresaw that the popular voice would be sure to accuse him of having connived at this escape of the Medicean prince, in the teeth of the order he had received not to permit either of them to go out of his sight. Another piece of ill fortune also happened to increase the popular notion in Florence that Strozzi was playing a double game. The Cardinal of Cortona did, in fact, as Filippo had deemed likely, endeavour to introduce a body of men for the reinforcement of the garrison. And they were all caught and made prisoners by the guard which had been placed around the fort. Now among the men thus arrested there were a few Florentines; and these, as taken with arms in their hands against their country, ought to have been put to death. But Filippo conceiving, says his brother, that the duties of a provost-marshal formed no part of his commission, and being unwilling to meddle with the shedding of blood, suffered these culprits to be liberated, together with the rest of the men who had been arrested.

The news of this leniency was exceedingly ill received by the city, and joined to the more important tidings of the escape of Ippolito, while the fortresses still remained in the hands of the Medici, effectually destroyed all the popularity which Filippo had hitherto enjoyed among the masses. His conduct, as well as his social position and

connection with the obnoxious family by marriage, were, it must be admitted, all calculated to make a very suspicious mob imagine that their agent was playing into the hands of the enemy.

When he returned to Florence he was, as his brother tells us, as well received as ever by his brother nobles of the liberal party; but was looked upon with universal suspicion and aversion by the body of the people. The very fact, indeed, of his still standing well with the members of the 'Ottimati' was calculated, in the temper of mind which was rapidly gaining ground in the city, to ruin his reputation more completely with the general public. For the conviction that the nobles meant to turn the recent revolution wholly to their own advantage had taken complete possession of the public mind. 'These fellows,' said the popular orators—it is Varchi who thus gives us the pith of the democratic grumblings which were agitating the people—'these nobles are not striving for freedom of life and popular government, not a bit of it. What they want is the concentration of power in a few hands; what they call with their Greek names, that they think we don't understand, an aristocracy. They have not turned out the Medici in order that we may be free, but only to serve their own greatness. These men have, as the proverb says, honey in their mouths; but they keep the razor ready at their girdle. What is this board of a hundred and twenty men, which they have appointed, other than the oligarchy which they have always been driving at? Who does not know that the man who won't have you as an equal and compeer wants to have you his slave? It is quite clear that if we would be men, and not the oppressed subjects of three hundred tyrants instead of one, we must be vigilant, and mark well what they are doing, and not attend to what they say.'

Here we have the old ever-recurring mistake which so fatally set the populations of mediæval Italy on a false track in their quest of liberty, and which, down to the failure of the last of their many violent struggles to escape from bondage, has ever prevented the kindred race to the north of the Alps from making any progress towards social freedom. 'Who does not know that the man who will not have you for a compeer wants to have you as a slave?' said the Florence democrats. Here lies the root of the mistake. It was not good government that these men wanted, but a share in the privilege of governing ill; —not that the government should be so checked and rendered responsible, as to secure the cessation of abuses advantageous to the governors, but that such advantages should be more equally shared;—not that every individual should act in accordance with the dictates of his individual will to the utmost extent compatible with the like exercise of right by his neighbour, but that a much larger number, all perhaps, should in a corporate capacity enjoy the privilege of tyrannizing over each in his individual capacity.

In this temper of the commonalty, 'treason' was the accusation lightly conceived and readily bandied about, respecting this and the other of the 'Ottimati' chiefs of the revolution. Of treason to the popular cause, as it was understood by the people, they were no doubt guilty, every man of them. But as popular suspicion points always to the delinquency which it most hates and dreads, rather than to that which is most logically consistent with the people's own theory of the desires and plans of the suspected, collusion with the Medici was the crime for which the popular eye was most vigilantly on the watch, and which most violently excited the popular wrath.

The unlucky escape of the lad Ippolito from the hands of Strozzi, while the fortresses still remained in the power

of the Medici, and the humanity or weakness which had allowed the men taken in an attempt to reinforce the garrison at Pisa to escape unpunished, joined to Filippo's family connection with the hated race, all contributed to make out against the treasurer of the apostolic chamber a very strong case of suspicion of Mediceanizing tendencies. Our prudent man strove hard by memorials, protestations, and long justificatory statements to clear his reputation with the people. But Clarice had on her part, during his absence, been acting in a manner strongly calculated to offend the popular feeling, and to attract suspicion towards herself, thus clinching the case against her husband.

That that high-minded and masterful dame was most sincerely in earnest in her hatred to Clement, and in her vigorous co-operation in the kicking out of his governor, and the two questionable Medicean sciens under his protection, cannot be doubted. But it might well be questioned whether her zeal for their expulsion did not arise from their *not* being, rather than from their being, Medici. It excited her extreme indignation to see all the Medicean honours and ascendency in the hands of three illegitimate individuals, in the case of one of whom—Alessandro—the parentage on either side was very uncertain. Clarice herself was the legitimate daughter of Pietro, great-grandson of Cosimo 'pater patriæ;' and there also remained, as will be remembered, Caterina, the legitimate daughter of Clarice's brother Lorenzo, who afterwards became the world-famous Queen of France. And Clarice, that 'high-minded more than was prudent' lady, who was not of a disposition to feel that her sex was any bar to her own inheritance of the family honours, had been, since the departure of the Medici and of her husband, behaving in a manner which had attracted much unfavourable observation. No sooner was the Medici palace left empty

than she had transferred her residence thither, and gathered around her there a knot of the leading men among the 'Ottimati.' Niccolò Capponi and some of the others were 'visiting her there at all hours,' says Varchi, 'so that there was a constant coming and going of citizens about the house,' which made much talk, and gave rise to sinister suspicions among the people. Was the lady Clarice affecting to hold court there in the old place? Was that house once again to be made the centre of the government of the city? Niccolò Capponi, who had been chosen Gonfaloniere by the great council, had received more than one warning, that if he valued his safety he would be less often seen coming and going through the doors of the Palazzo Medici. 'Niccolò,' said a friend to him on one occasion, 'you will get yourself torn to pieces one of these days if you continue to frequent that house.'

So that when Filippo returned after his short absence from Florence, he found himself, instead of one of the most popular men in the city, a marked object of distrust, aversion, and suspicion.

This was of itself sufficiently disagreeable to a man who lived so much upon the *popularis aura*, as our clever and prudent banker. But Filippo saw other signs of troublous times ahead, which combined with his present unpopularity to lead him to the determination of running from the open sea of public life into the safe harbour of quiet privacy for a while.

Niccolò Capponi was, there is every reason to believe, an honest man, as men went in that century and country; and was anxious to do what he to the best of his ability believed true patriotism demanded of him for the interest of his country. But he was essentially a weak man; 'not the bravest man in the world,' says Varchi, and

liable not only to be frightened, but to be over-persuaded into vacillations, ruinous to the policy which he wished to support. Before long he allowed himself to be drawn into a correspondence with Clement. There is reason to believe that this, imprudent as it was, had been entered into with perfectly pure and patriotic intentions on his part. But, as may easily be imagined, when it was at last, in consequence of an accident evincing gross carelessness, discovered, the people in all good faith considered it, and his enemies with malicious falseness pretended to consider it, as the blackest treason. And Gonfaloniere Niccolò Capponi very narrowly escaped losing his head. Now the earlier parts of this correspondence had been, by express desire of Pope Clement, communicated by Capponi to his brother-in-law Strozzi. This very flattering mark of the holy father's confidence, which brother Lorenzo parenthetically remarks was most likely intended by the pope to bring his dear friend Strozzi into trouble, did not suit prudent Filippo by any means. Then again the daily increasing distrust between the different political parties in the city, and the violent measures prompted by the growing misgiving and animosity, warned him that the present condition of public affairs in Florence was little likely to be durable. The pope too, who had very shortly after the memorable sack of his city been permitted to escape from St. Angelo, and had retired to Orvieto, was not likely, as prudent Filippo easily divined, to remain a prisoner there long. Pope and emperor, as he well knew, had too great need of each other to remain for a great length of time enemies. It was affording too fine a chance to the interests of humanity; a falling out of rogues, by which, more than in any other case ever yet seen in the world, honest men might come by their own. And Filippo knew courts, and their inmates, and their

interests too well to believe that the holy father and the most Catholic emperor would give mankind any such opportunity. And when the pope should once again feel himself firm on St. Peter's seat, and once again get a firm grasp of the pastoral staff, Filippo knew that it would go hard with the revolted city.

All these considerations made it clear to Strozzi that there was in all ways more to be lost than gained by meddling with public affairs just then. And there was yet another reason which powerfully conduced to persuade him to efface himself for a while. This was the plague, which, having been for some months lurking amid the population, burst out in July and August with such tremendous violence, that the number of new cases were two hundred each day, and the number of deaths a hundred and fifty.

All these causes combined to produce a condition of public and private misery, which Strozzi had no notion of sharing. We have seen him cleverly leave Rome behind him when the bad time was coming. And now, either in perfect retirement in his own house in the city, or in his lovely villa of Le Selve, on the healthy heights overlooking the valley of the Arno near Signa, he left the faction and pestilence stricken city to itself.

The fatal term of Florentine and Italian liberty was now near. It was the last sunset hour before the long night of three hundred years; and that sun went down in lurid blood-red clouds, and amid sinister portents. For Italy, as well as for Florence, the old 'most republican city of all republics,' life, and hope, the hope of improvement, advancement, social, moral, and intellectual—the possibility of generous aspirations of a noble life, of good work to be done, and hardy, hearty virtues to be fostered in the doing of it; all this was waning low for all Italy,

as well as for Florence. For Florence was, with all its numerous and salient faults, the well-head of political life and social intelligence, whence, had time been allowed, the rest of the peninsula would have been civilized. Nothing but the total extinguishing of liberty could have secured to the papacy three hundred more years of existence, at least in Italy. Its destruction, it is true, made no declared and recognized portion of the political programme of any political party then extant. But there were signs of the times, and men's minds were moving in a direction which indicated clearly enough, or at least indicate to us, who are enabled to take a synoptical view of the field of action, that that most monstrous and most successful of all the engines ever invented for the depression of the many to the profit of the few, would not have been able to hold its ground much longer by the exercise of its own proper forces. Hitherto the papacy had not only stood by its own strength, but had supported much else by its assistance. From that time forth it has existed only by the aid and permission of other tyrannies, whose patronage it purchases by killing the souls of nations, and thus rendering their bodies manageable by despots.

Much more, therefore, than the fate of Florence, more than the fate of Italy, was sealed by the unholy alliance of pope and emperor, which trampled the life out of the most republican of republics. Yes; it was the death of liberty in Florence, which more immediately and more notably than any other of the co-operating causes gave another three hundred of years of life to the papacy. And, if the hopes and strivings of humanity are not yet once again destined to be adjourned—it will be the resurrection of Florentine liberty that will most contribute to liberate mankind at last from its poisonous tyranny.

When the trial, which failed after the last expulsion of

the Medici in 1527, was being made, very much want of wisdom, and sadly too much want of worth, contributed to produce the failure. Had Niccolò Capponi been a Cavour, still more had the traitor Malatesta Baglioni been a Garibaldi, the issue might have been different. But the men of that age were such as that age grew them. And Filippo Strozzi, in whatever other qualities he may have been deficient, had enough of the serpent's wisdom to foresee that the powers of darkness were in all probability about to triumph, for that bout at least, over the children of light. So Filippo thought it prudent to be on the side, or at least to hold himself in readiness to be on the side, of the powers of darkness. For we are justified in concluding that Strozzi in his heart of hearts knew them to be such. He was well read in the history of his country, and had been in youth nourished on those lessons of classical antiquity, which have been often deemed to form the surest foundations for a patriotic love of liberty even among ourselves, and which come home with tenfold force and applicability to the heads and hearts of men of the same race with the old exemplars, their own descendants living on the same soil, and endowed with similar idiosyncrasies. Strozzi also knew the papacy well; knew it, as few laymen knew it; and had as little respect for or belief in its pretensions to sacredness, heaven-given authority, or even ordinary fitness for government, as any eighteenth-century Frenchman ever had.

But Filippo Strozzi's freethinking was of that hopeless, sterile kind, which was so abundantly generated in his day, simply by the near view of the utter worthlessness of all that the world was told to venerate, and the utter incredibility of all that it was told to believe. The most valuable perceptions, as well as the most pernicious errors

of the intelligence, went down together before such scepticism. Despairingly excluding the possibility of any world-theory based on a belief in the final invincibility of truth and good, it fell into that genuine atheism which manifests itself in the persuasion that evil, even known and recognized as such, may be so far victorious over good as to make it really on the whole wiser and more profitable to fight on evil's side. Too large a dose of such scepticism effectually excludes from a social body that required amount of worth, without which, according to the bible history, God cannot save the city.

So Filippo left the management of Florentine affairs to such as chose to face the pestilence, and the violence of parties, and the wrath of the pope, and failures, disappointments; and strivings innumerable for the sake of an idea, and hugged himself in thinking of his own superior prudence; rejoiced in the healthy breeze round his villa, while they were inhaling pestilence in the reeking city; smiled when he heard of their processions, and crowded throngs around the miraculous black virgin brought ten miles into Florence, from her home on the Impruneta mountain, for the staying of the plague; congratulated himself more than ever on his far-sighted prudence, when poor Niccolò Capponi got detected in corresponding with the pope; laughed loud and long when his weak but honest brother-in-law, who for his part really believed in Savonarola and his teaching, and his prophecies, proposed, amid the shouts of the applauding Florentines, to elect, with all due ceremony of ballot-boxes, Christ to be their king; and carefully marked the signs in the political horizon, which presaged the speedy reconciliation of emperor and pope, respecting the results of which *he* at least laboured under no delusion.

During this time of retirement Filippo lost his wife

Clarice: she died on the 3rd of May, 1528; and was buried in the Strozzi chapel, in the church of Santa Maria Novella at Florence. Her brother-in-law Lorenzo's notice of her death, and of Filippo's feeling on the occasion, together occupy but two lines of print. Her husband, he says, 'cordially lamented her, and afflicted himself much:' not a word more. The tenderest affection and the truest regret may, indeed, be efficiently recorded by the simplicity of that laconic phrase. But Clarice as a wife deserved some further recognition of her virtues as a true, faithful, and able helpmate to her husband. Putting all sentiment out of the question, her loss must have been a very important one to Strozzi: as far as we can judge by the few traits of her conduct which have been preserved for us, she must have had a far more lovable and more generous nature than that of her prudent husband. But she evidently identified herself sufficiently with his views, interests, and schemes, to be ever ready to lend an actively helping hand, and to take more than a wife's share of the labouring oar whenever the business in hand could be advanced by it. In the course of nineteen years of married life she was the mother of ten children, seven sons and three daughters, of whom some notice will be found in the following pages. But she had in her Piagnone brother-in-law's eyes the unpardonable fault of being a Medici. Had she been of any other race, we might probably have had from him a fuller recognition of what her husband owed to her, and a less slighting notice of her death.

Filippo did nothing to assuage his grief, or testify to his sense of his wife's merit by the usual method of monumental marble. But when he was on the eve of his own death, we find him providing in his will that the omission should be remedied, 'seeing that Clarice my

consort deserves by her virtues to be honoured by me with a monument.'

Shortly after his wife's death, considering that there was no speedy prospect of any such settlement of matters at Florence as would make it profitable or pleasant for him to take any part in them, and, as his brother says, 'not choosing to incur danger either to his life or to his property,' he determined to put himself out of the way of either by retiring to Lyons. Of course a 'pretext' was needed for doing so; it would never have done to take such a step without assigning any other motive than his own good pleasure; and Lyons was selected by him, because the needed pretext was ready to his hand. He went, says Lorenzo, 'under colour of his mercantile affairs;' and these were at that time numerous between the Italian cities and Lyons. There were Lucchese and Milanese merchants established there, engaged in the importation of the silk which Lyons was already employed in weaving; and wherever a commerce of that nature existed, there in those days were sure to be found Florentine bankers, who gathered in every part of Europe the immense wealth of which Florence even yet shows such marvellous traces. So Filippo, 'seeing that France was a country much trusted by the republic,' was allowed to go to Lyons 'on urgent private affairs,' though the Gonfaloniere, as Lorenzo assures us, was much annoyed at his departure.

In speaking of this absence from Florence, Lorenzo Strozzi lets fall a little phrase—the only one of the sort to be met with in his biography of his brother—which seems to indicate either a slight soreness at the superior magnificence and brilliancy of his younger brother, or else (and this is the more likely explanation of the words) an intention of intimating his own disapprobation, as a

Piagnone and strict and consistent disciple of Savonarola, of his brother's lax morality and dissipated habits.

'Filippo's departure from Florence was also,' says he, 'in accordance with the advice of his brother Lorenzo, who, though he took no part in Filippo's pleasures, bore his full share in his dangers.' Perhaps the word here translated 'pleasure,' may mean rather 'prosperity;' and in that case, the biographer's intention would be to insinuate a protest in favour of his own incorruptible radicalism, which would stoop to no participation in benefits derived from the Medici. And, in truth, we know that Lorenzo, through all changes in the political state of Florence, lived and died a consistent republican and enemy of the Medici. But the above little sentence of the biographer further suggests the question, why Lorenzo thought it necessary to advise his brother to fly from the dangers that surrounded him at Florence, when he who shared the danger, whatever it was, and whom no such important duties called to continue in that city, did not think of accompanying him in his flight? Perhaps he considered the rich banker-statesman's life a more important one than that of the quiet retiring radical methodist.

Filippo remained at Lyons an entire year, from May, 1528, that is, to May, 1529, 'employing himself,' Lorenzo tells us, in study, and living with the foreign and other merchants there on terms of such pleasant intimacy, that at his departure the whole city was grieved to lose him.'

Of the quiet year thus passed lying *perdu* at Lyons, while Florence was under every disadvantage preparing for her last great struggle, we hear nothing more, save a story of certain bread riots which Strozzi was prominently active in putting down. The part of the city between the Rhone and the Saône was pillaged by the

insurgents; and the governor, who was also an Italian, Teodoro Trivulzio, a cousin of the great General Gian Jacopo Trivulzio, was obliged to escape across the Saône into the house of Filippo. The greater part of the rich merchants, of whom a large proportion seem to have been Italians, also sought refuge in the same quarter, across the river. The first riot had taken place on a Sunday; and during the whole week that part of the city of which they had made themselves masters remained in the hands of the rioters. A new outbreak was expected on the next Sunday; and the wealthy inhabitants were awaiting in terror an attack on the quarter behind the Saône, to which they had retired. So great, indeed, was the panic, that the general idea was that the best thing they could do would be to get together what was portable of their property, and fly from the city; but this idea was abandoned entirely, as Lorenzo would have us believe, in obedience to the bolder counsels of Filippo. He conferred with 'the consul and other chiefs of the Florentine nation' in Lyons; and on ascertaining that there were two hundred Florentines capable of bearing arms in the city, he enrolled them, and chiefly by their means, not only succeeded in defending the bridge which separated the quarter of the town where they were from the rioters, but eventually carried the war into their quarter; and finally defeated and put them down. The most guilty of the ringleaders escaped and fled the city; and several of the *less guilty*, says Lorenzo, were executed on the bridge over the Saône; 'so that,' concludes the admiring brother, 'it may be truly said that it was Filippo who restored the city to liberty, and saved the substance of our merchants.'

This event took place shortly before Strozzi left Lyons, in the spring of 1529. He travelled thence to Avignon,

and visited Vaucluse, and the source of the Sorgues, for the sake of 'Messer Francesco Petrarca,' whose memory, says the Florentine poet, Luigi Alamanni (the same whose escape from Florence, on occasion of the Diacceto conspiracy against Clement, has been related in a previous chapter, and who must have visited Vaucluse much about the same time as Filippo Strozzi), makes the copious streams of the Sorga seem almost more beautiful than those of Arno.

Either Filippo remained more than a year at Lyons, or he spent some months in loitering on his journey southwards, for we are told that when he reached Genoa he found the emperor there; and this marks the time as August in that year. Filippo found the pope and the most Catholic emperor, who had sacked his capital and imprisoned his sacred person, fast friends and confederates for the destruction of liberty and popular government in Florence. By the treaty of Barcelona, made between Charles V. and Clement on the 29th of June, it was arranged that the emperor should bestow the hand of his illegitimate daughter Margarita on Alessandro, the illegitimate son of the pope;[1] and that the imperial forces should crush 'rebellion' in Florence, and establish an orderly despotism in that city, as a provision and establishment for the interesting young couple, under the protection of their two august parents. The peace of Cambrai was arranged shortly afterwards, on the 5th of August, between Charles and Francis I. The pope and the other princelings of Italy were included in the amicable arrangements. Only Florence, which had been silly enough up to the last to look to the despot Francis for aid in her struggle for freedom, was excluded from the league. The most republican of republics was left to stand alone, and

[1] Not certainly, but in all probability, he was so.

fight her last fight for the maintenance of the last spark of liberty against the confederated despots of Europe.

Of course they were all friends, 'most Catholic emperor,' 'most Christian king,' 'most holy pope;' of course they were all fast friends for such a crusade.

Alessandro, the son-in-law elect of the emperor, was at Genoa, paying his court to his intended father-in-law, when Strozzi arrived there; and he and Alessandro, as we learn from Varchi, and not from his brother Lorenzo, had a long secret conference one evening. What business had a citizen of free Florence, who would fain have had it believed (in case of the worst) that he was a faithful partisan of the popular cause; what business had such a one, it might be indignantly asked in Florence, to be closeted in secret consultation with the enemy of his country? What business, indeed, had Filippo Strozzi to 'find himself' at Genoa at all, just when the emperor and Alessandro were passing through that city?

From Genoa our cautious man, having but little doubt by this time on which side his bread would eventually be found to be buttered, came on to Lucca, and there stopped short. He caused such members of his family as were in Florence to come to him in the former city, and summoned thither also from Padua, his sons Piero, Ruberto, and Lione, who were pursuing their studies in that university. Many of the Florentine nobles who had always been adherents of the Medici, and others whose patriotism was not of such calibre as to prompt their sharing in the fiery ordeal through which it was now evident that the devoted city was about to pass, sought refuge in Lucca. That rival and aristocratic city, which was well pleased to watch the calamities that were coming upon its powerful neighbour, manifested some intention of refusing shelter to these Florentines. But the

pope, who doubtless knew his own, expressed his wish to the Lucchese that no such harsh inhospitality should be put in practice.

Lorenzo Strozzi also visited his brother in Lucca, having got out of Florence for the purpose with considerable difficulty, and only by virtue of his well-known affection to the republic and unblemished good faith. He says of himself, that he went to Lucca on this errand, 'moved by the debt of patriotic love for Florence.' Does this mean that the object of his visit was to induce his brother to embrace loyally the popular cause, and return with him to the city? It would seem to be the only sense of which the phrase is susceptible. And yet such an explanation is hardly consistent with the total absence of any tone of blame in his statement of the reasons which induced Filippo to decide on remaining at Lucca. It is true, he attributes this determination to illness. But an illness which began and ended so very opportunely, as did that of Filippo Strozzi, was hardly likely to be credited, and, indeed, was not credited by the citizens in general. The biographer admits, moreover, that his brother had decided on awaiting in Lucca the issue of the struggle about to commence, before he was stricken with this convenient illness. Having said that such was Filippo's intention, he proceeds:—

'But it would certainly have been difficult and almost impossible for him to have maintained for long the neutrality which he desired, had he not happened to fall into a long and serious illness. This in the first place excused him to Clement for not joining the party of his holiness, as did those citizens who adhered to his side; and in the second place excused him to the city for not returning thither, according to the decree to that effect, commanding, under heavy penalties, all citizens absent without due

cause to come into the city. Hence it was for a while believed by many that this indisposition was feigned for the purpose of avoiding a declaration in favour of either side, and as a means of saving himself with both parties according to the issue of the struggle.'

The curt and dry manner in which he adds a few lines subsequently, 'He never recovered his strength till the end of the war, which was in August, 1530,' without any word of comment or explanation, seems almost like a satirical admission of the fictitious nature of so accommodating an illness. As for himself, he says nearly as curtly, and not without such a juxtaposition of the two statements as seems intended to suggest an observation of the contrast between his own conduct and that of his brother, that though Filippo advised him to remain at Lucca, urging the dangers which he would encounter by returning to Florence, 'he,' the writer, Lorenzo himself that is, 'thought fit to give far more weight to the promise he had made to return, and to his country's need, than to the advice thus given him.'

So the quiet Puritan radical, whose name the world would never have heard had it not come down to us as that of his brother's biographer, returned to live up to his convictions by sharing in all the dangers and privations of the doomed city. And the splendid financier and statesman, whose name occupies so large a place in the history of his country, and far from an unhonoured place in the pages of its historians, remained safe out of harm's way, prudently preparing his 'excuse' for whichever party might win the day, and ready to turn the success of either to his own profit as best he might.

'Here then we see,' thinks the practical man who knows the world, 'the true teaching of history. How constantly it confutes the copy-book falsehood about

honesty being the best policy, which children and fools are made to believe!' Quite true, my practical friend! That nursery dictum *is* preached in a manner which seeks to assert what all history proves to be false. And your clear head most justly recognizes as very contemptible trash all the lame attempts to persuade men to do God's work, by assuring them that it will be paid for by Mammon's wages. Did not this great man, Filippo Strozzi, find for himself, and prove for us, that the most thorough systematized *dis*honesty was the best policy? Did it not *succeed?* Did it not give him wealth, power, station, reputation, and 'a name in the story'? Did it not enable him altogether to eclipse his honest elder brother, and to remain extant as a worshipful mortal in a grand fur coat, hung out for the admiration of posterity in the front of these pages and elsewhere? Honesty the best policy, indeed! The nursery dictum, it is to be feared, must, if it would put itself in accord with fact, content itself with asserting, that though dishonesty is undeniably the best policy for the attaining of such ends as dishonest men most value, yet honesty answers best for the ends which should to honest men be dearest.

But this would be too long for a copy-book; and moral teachers prefer the shorter form, which seeks to allure recruits to God's service by promises of Mammon's bounty money. And then they point to the honest trader, who made a fortune and grew to be lord mayor. But if his success were due to his honesty, no dishonest trader would achieve similar success. Why not honestly say that both of them won by activity, thrift, and industry the reward appropriate to those qualities which are compatible either with honesty or dishonesty?

Filippo Strozzi, who knew perfectly well what was the best policy for the attainment of his objects, was

actively, thriftily, and industriously dishonest, and succeeded accordingly.

But it is remarkable that he should have deemed it necessary to guard so cautiously against the possibility that republican Florence might win the day unaided against pope and emperor combined. He doubtless knew, after that secret talk with Alessandro at Genoa, more completely than was known to the citizens of the republic, how absolutely they were isolated, and abandoned by all Europe, and how powerful were the forces about to be put in operation for their destruction. And yet he did not deem the issue certain. It was upon the cards, he thought, that the gallant little city might hold her own against all the power of pope and emperor. It was not then the mad enterprise of hot-headed ignorant enthusiasts, that last struggle for liberty in Europe. The misery and dreadful sufferings of that storied siege, the heroic endurance of which, despite all shortcomings in wisdom, union, and forbearance, deserves the gratitude and admiration of all posterity, and of every people in Europe, were not the criminal result of the desperation of a knot of factious rebels. Shrewd Filippo Strozzi, assuredly no enthusiast, nor fanatic lover of liberty, he, cautious Filippo, scanning all the chances with a cool and vigilant eye, thought that liberty might perhaps be saved by that misery and those sufferings.

The result is one of the pages of history that are not forgotten. The story, too, of that memorable siege, the willing sacrifices and exemplary constancy of the citizens, the unspeakable barbarities of the besieging army, the unavailing heroism of the citizen captain Ferruccio, and the final treachery of the hireling patrician general, the Perugian Baglioni, have been often related in detail.

Nor, moving and enticing as is the tale, has it any place in these pages. For our 'hero' had no part in it.

On the 12th of August, 1530, Florence signed a very favourable capitulation (which the emperor and the pope of course broke in every particular with the most unblushing ill-faith and perjury), and in the course of that same month Filippo Strozzi 'recovered his strength.'

CHAPTER X.

Measures for establishing despotism in Florence.—Strozzi implicated in them.—Infamous policy of Guicciardini.—Varchi's notion of the dignity of history.—Position of Cosimo, the future duke, in 1530.—His mother's letter to Strozzi.—Interview between Strozzi and Clement. —Character of Alessandro de' Medici.—Clement's caution in the enslaving of Florence.—Strozzi's letters from Rome in 1531.— Alessandro's conduct at Florence.—Hatred between him and Strozzi. —Trumped-up charge of poisoning against Strozzi.—Its consequences —Meeting of the pope and emperor at Bologna.

IMMEDIATELY after the capitulation of Florence, in August, 1530, Filippo was summoned to the city by Bartolomeo Valori, Pope Clement's *alter ego* for the re-establishment of a despotic government, and appointed one of the magistrates charged with the superintendence of the approvisionment of the city, a sort of civil commissariat officer. Filippo hastened to obey, and immediately assumed his new office. He was also named as one of the new 'balia,' or board of a hundred and thirty-six counsellors, whose office was to pretend to be a sort of parliament, while they were in fact the simple executive of the orders of Clement.

In the choice of the members of this board, as in that of all the different magistrates and placemen under the new government, Clement and those creatures of his whom he really trusted, and who acted with and for him in the work of wholly breaking the spirit of the stiffnecked old democracy, and bringing it under the yoke of a per-

fect despotism, proceeded on one systematized and settled plan. It consisted in placing all such of their doubtful adherents, and suspected lukewarm friends as they could not wholly trust, in such situations as should draw down on them the greatest possible quantity of odium from their fellow-citizens. And as the duties exacted from the placemen appointed with such views were of the most hateful kind, the desired result was completely attained. Pensions even and posts of profit were distributed according to the same calculations and motives. It was managed that the emoluments should be raised and paid in the most invidious and offensive manner, and no ingenuity was spared to load every man who accepted office under the government with the hatred and vindictive animosity of his fellow-citizens.

For this was Clement's notion of making sure friends for himself in the city. His holiness acted precisely upon the principle of those malefactors, who insist that each man of their band shall equally stain himself with crime, to provide against possibilities of desertion. 'When I have made these men,' argued he, 'so detestable to the mass of the citizens, that their lives and fortunes would not be worth an hour's purchase under any government save mine, then I may depend on their faithfully serving me.' And this abominable policy was not acted on, as many an evil thing is done, in the secret of one bad heart, to which the evildoer but half confesses the whole baseness of his own imperfectly defined motives; on the contrary, this mode of action and the motives for it were avowed, enlarged on, and insisted on by Clement's creatures with a cynicism almost incredible.

Several state papers are extant belonging to the period immediately after the capitulation, and consisting of memorials addressed to Clement by his creatures, letters

from such of them as were in Rome to those at Florence, and *vice versâ*, etc. And in all of these, maxims of government and schemes for upholding a despotism admitted to be hateful to the whole mass of its subjects are set forth and avowed, which, however much they may have been in the hearts of other tyrants, have rarely been thus unblushingly put in writing. Among the worst of these is a 'discourse' addressed to Clement by Francesco Guicciardini, the celebrated historian. Having pointed out in it that too great an indulgence in the luxury of vengeance would so ruin the city as to make it worthless in a financial point of view, he tells the holy father that 'it is necessary to steer carefully between these difficulties, remembering that it is needful to keep life in the city if we would get anything out of it; and that whatever may from this motive be kept back for another time, is deferred, not forgotten.'[1]

This clear-headed and evil-hearted man, who knew Clement's inmost soul, evidently feels that his prudent appeal from the holy father's vindictiveness to his cupidity would not avail to stay his hand from an improvident amount of destruction, without the promise of full future satisfaction for the vengeance to be nursed the while in the 'apostolic' bosom.

'It is true,' he proceeds after some other remarks on the situation of Florence, 'that our friends are few; but they are placed in such circumstances that if they are not altogether bereft of their senses, they must know that it would not be possible for them to live in Florence if the dominion of the house of Medici were to cease in the city.' Again he says, 'we have the entire population for our

[1] Discorso di Messer Francesco Guicciardini. Printed in the Appendix of Documents to the first volume of the Storia d' Alessandro de' Medici, by Rastrelli, Firenze, 1781, p. 261.

enemy, and the young more violently than the old; so that we must look to be insecure for a hundred years;' and we 'must, therefore, he argues, so dispense our favours that the receivers of them 'may desire the stability of the present order of things, not so much from any good will they may bear to it, as from fear of what might follow any change. . . . The means of gathering a body of firm and safe supporters, new and old, are not easy. I do not, therefore, object to making men sign declarations, and other such plans. But such means are insufficient. It is necessary that honours and emoluments should be so distributed, that whoever partakes of them should become so odious to the entire country, as to have the conviction forced on him that his life would not be safe under a popular government. . . . I would select a board of sixty or eighty citizens from a chosen body of two hundred, to which should be admitted only safe men, or such as it is desirable to gain; and besides making use of such select board as the principal executors of the state, I would give them a hundred and fifty, or two hundred ducats each a year, which would bring such an odium upon every man of them that they would never be able to recover it. . . . And it would be necessary that these salaries should be paid directly from the city funds, to make those who draw them the more hated.'

What does the reader think of this manifestation of the inmost sentiments and best wisdom of the great historian, to whose classic pages youthful legislators and statesmen *en herbe* are sent to learn, at the feet of such a Gamaliel, from his 'knowledge of the human heart,' 'profound insight into human affairs,' etc., etc.; the rudiments of statecraft?

The 'balia' or board, to which Filippo was appointed a member, on the principles so luminously set forth by

the great historian, was admirably well calculated to fulfil the intentions of those who conferred the promotion. The principal duty assigned to it was that of making out the lists for condemnation to death, confiscation, or exile of such as were from their antecedents obnoxious to Clement. And they were by no means permitted to shirk their work. The holy father continually complained that the victims were too few, and demanded fresh holocausts; threatening upon one occasion that, if the condemnations did not go on more briskly, he would take the matter in hand himself in a way that they would not like. And men repeated to one another an answer that Clement had made to one who, wishing to pay court to him immediately after the capitulation, had said to him, that in his humble opinion the best way to extinguish the desire for popular government in Florence would be to destroy the hall of the Great Council, and toss the benches into the Piazza. 'My good man,' said Clement, with a sinister smile, 'the Florentines would hold their council in the Piazza; and, inasmuch as that is bigger than the hall, and would hold more, the evil would be increased. No; it would be more to the purpose to let the hall and the benches remain where they are, and remove the men.'[1]

Lorenzo the biographer is hard pressed to make excuses for his brother's share in the odious duties assigned to him. He was, by Clement's special direction, one of those members of the board whom Valori, the pope's lieutenant, called to a private conference, in order to point out to them certain individuals whom they were expected to condemn; 'in order that Filippo might go on incurring universal hatred more and more every day,' says Lorenzo. But he adds, that his brother often declared to him that he did not feel *much* remorse of conscience by reason of

[1] Rastrelli, op. cit., vol. i. p. 232.

the small or rather no fault of his in the matter; seeing that, as he had to speak last at the board, as being the youngest, and that he could not be supposed to know much about the guilt of the parties, as having been absent during the siege, he was not called upon to propose anything, but only had to consent to what the others proposed. The circumstance of his repeating this *often* to his brother, may perhaps justify us in giving him credit for a conscience that was *not* satisfied with such excuses.

Good Benedetto Varchi thought it desirable to record the names of all the hundred and thirty-six citizens who were called to compose this board; but as his history was composed to be read to Duke Cosimo, he deems it necessary to apologize for introducing so many citizens' names in the hearing of such noble ears; and with wonderful *naïveté* most amusingly prefaces his enumeration thus: 'True,' says he, 'it would be more magnificent and more honourable for me, and more delightful and wonder-stirring for my readers, if I could always have under my pen popes, or kings, or emperors, or other such great personages, and, as a necessary consequence' (Did laughter-loving old Varchi enjoy a chuckle in his sleeve, as he read this to Cosimo the duke?); 'always be relating more lofty matters, and deeds more worthy of being read. Yet, since I am writing the history of a particular city, it is reasonable that I adapt not the matter to myself, but myself to the matter, be it what it may.'

This wonderful passage was written at a day removed by the lapse of an entire generation from the times of which it treats. And when one thinks of the stupendous impertinence and absurdity of such courtier-like phrases in the mouth of an historian, writing of the fortunes of Florence, of all spots on the world's surface, the sentiments adopted speak volumes of the distance men's minds had

traversed in those few years, and of the marvellous rapidity with which they had learned 'the art of sinking.' It is a striking first stage on the long, long road in the same direction which they were beginning to travel.

This Duke Cosimo, to whom Varchi read his history of Florence, was the son of that terrible Giovanni delle Bande Nere, of whose death in battle, disputing the passage of the Po with Bourbon's troops, mention has been made in a former chapter. He was, as has been explained, the only legitimate male representative of the Medicean race. But being legitimate, while the illegitimate scions of the elder branch held, and intended to hold and transmit to their heirs, the family possessions, honours, and power, he was looked on with no friendly eye by Clement and the two young hopes of the elder line, Ippolito and Alessandro. At the time our story has reached, 1530 that is, he was eleven years old, and was living in poverty and obscurity with his mother, Maria Salviati de' Medici. It is curious, bearing in mind the position in which Filippo Strozzi and Cosimo the duke stood towards each other a few years later, to find the distressed widow appealing to the wealthy banker on the behalf of herself and her son in a letter, which Signor Bigazzi has printed among his documentary illustrations of Niccolini's tragedy.

'Magnificent and much-respected sir,' writes the noble but poverty-stricken widow—'we are—my son and I—to that degree impoverished and broken down, not only by private debts (of her late husband), but by those due to the corporation, that we are in a desperate position, unless we can find somebody who will assist us till we can get breathing time. We therefore suppliantly entreat your magnificence, that if the other creditors press and crush us, you will have only the more pity on us; and, as you have had from us two hundred ducats up to this time, be

content to bear with us for this year. I declare to you on my faith, that it is impossible for us to do more; and I will use every effort to meet you in such a manner as you will find satisfactory at the end of the time named. I implore and beseech your excellency, and with all my heart beg of you not to deny us this favour. For should you decide otherwise, and determine on pressing us, I know of no means of meeting your claim. We will not the less strive to our utmost to put together another two hundred ducats within this year, if it be in anywise possible, and if you will not have patience with us for the entire debt. Our gratitude will be greater should you give us one year's time for the whole sum. Yet it will be no less if you will content yourself with the two hundred ducats. I will say no more, save that Cosimo and I commend ourselves earnestly to your magnificence, awaiting your favourable reply.

'Your cousin, and sister,

'MARIA SALVIATI DE' MEDICI.'

Whether this earnest appeal was favourably listened to by the great capitalist, we have not the means of knowing. But we know that within ten years of the date of that letter, the great capitalist was appealing as earnestly for life to that boy Cosimo—then become, as he has been called, the Tuscan Tiberius—and appealing in vain.

For the present it was Filippo who was engaged in condemning others. But though he obediently did the dirty work of this sort assigned to him by the pope, he very shortly perceived that he was not among the really trusted friends of the new government. They allowed him to ruin his credit and popularity by pandering to their bloodthirsty vindictiveness; but never invited him to any of those inner council-chambers and unofficial

meetings at which the real intentions of the rulers were discussed and planned. In a word, he felt that he was not in Clement's good books; and he determined to go to Rome, and seek an interview with the pontiff, and if possible deceive him into supposing that the whole course of his conduct in the late changes and revolutions had been such as to merit the full confidence and approbation of his holiness.

But the emprise was assuredly an arduous one. When Greek meets Greek! we know the rest. And in this high tournament of falsehood, hypocrisy, and lying, now to come off between the pope and his dear friend, banker, and loan contractor, both champions were of the highest force, skilled equally in attack, parry, and defence. It was no easy matter to deceive Clement—no easy matter, even when bent on deceiving him, to come away without having been deceived by him. Not easy to deceive that holy father by deceitfulness, it must be understood. For such men as Clement are the most gullible of mortals in cases which require a clear and large perception of truth, and recognition of it, when it is before them. Well acquainted with falsehood in all its forms, skilled to track it through every double and cunning shift, and with a deep knowledge of the human heart, provided only it be such a human heart as their own, such men are ever deceived by their incapacity for reading or comprehending any of the nobler forms of human nature, and by an ignorance of truth, at least as profound as is their knowledge of falsehood.

Beginning from the events of May, 1527, Strozzi assured the pope that Clarice had consented to the revolution only in the hope that, by yielding to the storm which she could not resist, she might induce the new government to supply money for the purpose of liberating

his holiness from his prison in St. Angelo. She might—being a woman and imprudent—have acted injudiciously, though with a good motive. But in any case he was in no-wise responsible for her fault, if fault it were; especially as his holiness well knew that her relationship to himself had placed her in a position which prevented her husband from exercising that authority over her which he might otherwise have done. For his own part, he said that when he reached Florence all was completed in such a manner that it was altogether too late to attempt to alter it. Then he pointed out how he had allowed Ippolito to depart from Pisa, preferring to incur the enmity of the entire city rather than put a constraint on his holiness's nephew. He reminded him of the escape of those of his adherents who had attempted to reinforce the garrison at Pisa; and enlarged on the ill-will which he had brought upon himself at Florence, by having connived at it; and, says Lorenzo, Filippo enlarged on these topics with so much effect, at one moment aiding his argument with truth, and at another with falsehood, that Clement considered him wholly justified and cleared; 'or rather, seemed so to consider him, like a deep and sagacious man who lays aside but does not forget injuries.'

Clement pretended to receive his old friend at once into his full confidence; and, as an earnest of it, expressed to him his wish that 'Florence should be well purged of its peccant and malignant humours;' that the proscription should go on bravely; and sent him back to the city with the injunction to show his zeal and good sentiments by actively pushing on this good work.

It was no doubt perfectly true, that in making Filippo the depositary of such confidences, and intrusting him with such commissions, the intention of Clement was to ruin him in the opinion of his fellow-citizens, and reduce

him to a position of inextricable dependence on himself and his family. It was also very probably true that Strozzi knew this well, and hated Clement accordingly. But it does not seem to have been true, as Lorenzo Strozzi represents, that the execution of the Medicean vengeance, and the carrying out of their plans for reducing Florence to a despotism, were bitterly repugnant to Filippo, and consented to by him only so far as was absolutely necessary to secure his own safety. There is a letter from him written while at Rome upon this occasion to Francesco Vettori at Florence,[1] in a tone which evidences clearly enough that he entered with a will into all the pope's plans, and having quite made up his mind that this was now the winning side, intended in good faith and in earnest to identify himself with the Medici and their fortunes, and serve them zealously. Filippo Strozzi was not 'a good hater;' he was always able to forget an injury, and lay aside an enmity, if his interest required him to do so. He was too 'prudent' a man to indulge rancour at the expense of his interest. And although to Clement the gratification of his hatred and revenge were doubtless much dearer than to the more epicurean and less bitter nature of Strozzi, yet Clement also was of a character sufficiently crafty, politic, and calculating to lay aside for the nonce, if not to forget his hatreds, and to subordinate the gratification of them to the attainment of other objects. Thus, despite their real mutual feelings, the two prudent men, being useful to each other, managed through life to get on together, prevented by considerations of policy from ever allowing their smouldering enmity to burst into flame, or to bring them to an open rupture.

Thus Clement's nature was one which Strozzi understood,

[1] Documents to Niccolini's tragedy.

and could deal with. They were playing a game together, of which each recognized and understood the rules. Self-interest was the highest law to each. Let either show his adversary that such or such an action would offend that law, and it was a matter of course that it would be abstained from. But now Filippo was about to be brought into contact with a different class of character. Alessandro, the son (as was said, perhaps on no other ground than his woolly hair and strangely swarthy skin) of a black slave, for whose elevation to a despotic throne in Florence, Clement, heaven's viceregerent on earth, had expended a life of indefatigable labour and unstinting wickedness and baseness—this youth Alessandro was a being by comparison with whom even Clement seems in some sort respectable and elevated. The story of him and his rule in Florence is absolutely but the record of the unrestrained action of every evil passion that most disgraces humanity, unrestrained either by the power of others, or by any ray of intelligence within himself. He was an animal of too low a type for Filippo Strozzi to play out his accustomed game with him as with Clement. Any amount of wickedness under the regular control of prudential considerations Filippo could understand, calculate on, and warily sail with or against it as expediency might require; but he was thrown out by hatred as improvident as that of the venomous snake that bites the heel which offends it, though doomed to be crushed the next minute; by excesses as uncontrolled by human reason as those of a beast of the forest; and by the impoteney of craft against a nature incapable of valuing aught save the gratification of the moment.

Filippo Strozzi was, as the reader has long since ascertained, not an admirable or lovable man; but he was an infinitely—we may with accuracy say *infinitely*—superior

creature to this wretched Alessandro. He had varied and vigorous, if not large capacities, and many good gifts of sundry kinds all turned to worthlessness by the circumstances of the time, and the social element in which he lived. He would have been undoubtedly a distinguished man in any epoch and any country; and in a better day would have been a better man; but Alessandro de' Medici had no such possibilities in him. In any age, in any country, and in any station he would have been worthless and noxious. Morally deformed from his cradle upwards by the unfortunately compounded idiosyncrasy, inherited as we may believe from a long ancestry of passions unrestrained and physical natures deteriorated on the one side, and low organization and propensities on the other, the unfortunate creature might, by timely training on a judicious system of spiritual orthopedic treatment, have been rendered less harmful to others and to himself, and have been on this side of his grave placed on the first humble steps of the long path of gradual elevation. But taken to be made a prince in Rome in the sixteenth century, under the teaching of Clement VII.; destined from his youth upwards to the wielding of despotic power; turned loose at the age of twenty to work his will in a city wicked enough from the general decadence of the age, and now more especially demoralized and degraded by the recent triumph of all the worst elements in it over all the best; under these hot-house influences for the developing and intensifying all the evil that was in him, this first despotic master of priest-conquered Florence became a very incarnation of every most deadly and baneful ingredient to be found in human nature at its worst; a beast whose approach was more dangerous than that of the deadly cobra, and the baleful effects of whose existence were limited,—not, alas!

by the duration of it,—but only by the utmost circumference of the social circle to which they reached.

This was the man for whom Clement with thoughtful parental care was preparing the way in Florence, by the wholesale proscriptions which Strozzi was ordered to urge with renewed vigour on his return to Florence. This was the man of whom Guicciardini, the profound statesman, and the other creatures of Clement write in their consultative memorials, that the best mode of assuring to him that absolute power *which is necessary* will be to amuse the people with some false show of the old forms of free government!

As the pope knew well that all these preparations for despotism in Florence were in flagrant contravention of the terms of capitulation, signed between the city on one part, and himself and Charles V. on the other, he was disturbed by a quiet superfluous fear that his imperial ally might object to being thus made a partner in a scandalous breach of faith. The pope ought to have known the most Catholic sovereign better. Had it been indeed a question of faith between him and a brother monarch, why then honour might have demanded at least a proper dispensation from his oath from holy mother church. But with a set of rebellious burghers! Are emperors even now-a-days expected to keep faith with citizens? Populus vult decipi. And it is so difficult to manage them without deceiving them. In the sacred cause of order too! Pooh! pooh! Charles had no thought of objecting to aught that tended to the respectable start in life of his promising son-in-law, in a style becoming such a connection of a most Catholic emperor.

But careful Clement thought it well to be safe. So he determined that the changes to be introduced in the constitution of Florence should be demanded by the citizens

themselves. Cunning apostolic father! With this view he requested several of the principal men among his adherents in the city to draw up plans in writing, according to their own views of what was expedient for the 'reformation' of the government. Strozzi was one of the most prominent of those honoured with this commission. Of course they all knew what the pope wanted, and what they were expected to recommend. All of them had to write in the teeth of their consciences; but some did this with more, and some with less thorough-going audacity: some advocated milder and slower means for arriving at the object which all knew that they must aim at. The wiser courtiers, who felt that they would be violating their consciences, and selling their souls in vain unless they came up to the degree of iniquity on which the holy father was bent, recommended that the axe should be laid at the foundations of every civil liberty. Filippo was among these; being aware, as his brother phrases it, that there would be no safety for him in Florence unless he entered frankly on the path indicated to him.

It was with Filippo, too, that the pope, when he had the various memorials in his hand, read them over carefully. He made him, says Lorenzo, stop and read over a second time all such passages as he specially approved, without any more expressive signification of his opinion and wishes; and then bade him return to Florence, and calling together those who had supplied the papers, consult with them as to the perfect whole best deducible from their various suggestions. And once again Filippo, though little liking to be thus put in the van of the army of conspirators against his country, found himself obliged to obey and make another step in the downward path, on which the pontiff-devil, to whom he had sold himself, was driving him.

There are two letters extant from Strozzi to Francesco

Vettori, written during this visit to Rome in the early months of 1531. The whole tone of them is such as would perfectly have contented Clement had he seen them; and is that of one who has made the business on which he writes his own, and is genuinely anxious for its good success. He recommends that the taxes should be levied according to a regular system, and not arbitrarily; wisely observing, that commerce would thrive under heavy known burdens better than under lesser arbitrary and irregularly imposed contributions; and that commercial men would prefer a despotism which brought them this advantage to a popular government without it. He suggests that a new division of the citizens into noble and plebeian be made; the former to exclude all but the adherents of the Medici, and to have the monopoly of all honours and emoluments. He would wish, moreover, that these nobles should have the exclusive privilege of keeping in their houses and carrying arms; 'so that the difference between patricians and plebeians may be visible at every moment, and that in this way so great a hatred between one class and the other may be generated, that all possibility of concord or union between the two may be for ever impossible.' Anxious, however, not to stand alone in the odious office he was taking on himself, he begs his correspondent to 'set his fancy to work,' and propose something that may be useful for the end in view, telling him that the pope wishes him to do so, that his holiness has all that confidence in him which he himself could wish; and reminding him that these matters 'in truth interest us more than any other person, and that it is for us to think and propose to our superiors.' Finally, this elderly gentleman, now in his forty-third year, and the father of ten children, concludes by saying that he writes in haste, 'and with La Tullia (the celebrated Roman courtesan) by my side.'

The second letter is almost entirely about the same frail Tullia. It would seem that the Florence scandal-mongers had got some story of Strozzi's having been drawn into a quarrel on her account. And he begs this correspondent not to deem him such a blockhead as to have got into such scrape for 'La Tullia, or for any other woman.'

Shortly after the date of these letters, in the spring of 1531, that is, Strozzi returned to Florence, to prepare for and be present at the arrival of Alessandro, which took place on the 6th of July in that year. The lashed and cowed city well knew that little good of any kind was to be hoped from the young despot of twenty years, into whose hands they were to be delivered. But they very soon found that the reality of Alessandro's government, if such a term can be applied to lawless tyranny, exceeded all that their worst fears had anticipated. The history of his reign is but the chronicle of a series of excesses and outrages, related by the contemporary writers often in language as impossible to be reproduced as the worst details of those police cases from the hearing of which common decency requires the public to be excluded. His life was one continued orgy. The ministers to his lawless will were ruffians, chosen from among the vilest of mankind; vilest even according to the conventional scale, which makes that 'in the captain but a choleric word which in the soldier is flat blasphemy.' And these men were made not only the ministers to, but the companions of his pleasures; the companions also of most of the young, the wealthy, the beautiful, among the aristocracy of Florence. For we are not to suppose that though the city feared, loathed, and execrated the tyrant, it had virtue enough to leave him alone in his banqueting halls. Where and when indeed has been seen the city

virtuous enough for this? The victims of to-morrow and the friends of the victim of yesterday were happy in sharing the master's smile and the revel of to-day. Alessandro, intent only on the gratification of the moment, was with admirable success beginning that action on the national character which a long line of Medicean dukes sedulously continued, from motives of systematic policy, with results that even yet are impeding the regeneration of the people, and clogging with extra difficulty every step of their return to healthy and progressive national life.

As for Strozzi, his line of conduct in receiving the new ruler by right divine was quite clearly decided on by him. 'Knowing,' says his brother, 'how dangerous are the inclinations of young men by their very nature, and being well aware that the friends of the Medici had never forgiven him for his conduct in 1527, and envied him moreover his vast wealth, Filippo strove with all possible industry not only to render himself acceptible to Alessandro, but to acquire his confidence so far as to defend and take care of himself; availing himself for this purpose of his near connection with him by marriage.' If Strozzi was not withheld by political morality, which he did perfectly understand, from violating every principle of it for the sake of the hope of making his own profit out of his country's ruin, it was not to be expected that he should allow a personal morality, the rules of which he neither recognized nor comprehended, to stand in the way of any compliances which he thought likely to advance his object. The boon companion in his youth of Lorenzo, the reputed father of the new duke, he was quite ready now in middle age to repeat the part to his yet more profligate reputed son. And he had reason, says his brother, to flatter himself that his efforts were crowned with success;

that he had obliterated the past, and had crawled into the place he aspired to in Alessandro's favour.

It might have been thought that Strozzi had not yet to learn that no Medici ever forgave. In his biographer's words, 'his great wealth, the reputation of it greater even than the reality; his readiness to make friends by serving all who asked him to do so; the number and excellent qualities of his sons; the possession of a palace superior in magnificence to any other in the city; his nobility and other good qualities, joined to the envious and naturally suspicious character of Alessandro, ceased not to urge that prince to accomplish Filippo's ruin.'

The first attempt of the promising but inexperienced young despot to achieve this end, though well imagined, and well-executed enough to have secured the destruction of a smaller victim, was not sufficiently strong to strike down so big a one as Filippo Strozzi. But the story of it is worth having as a picture of life in Florence under her first duke.

Alessandro had an intimacy with a noble Florentine lady,[1] whose favours were, as he was aware, shared with Strozzi,[2] as well as with Lorenzo Ridolfi, Filippo Strozzi's son-in-law, and Robert his son. Now though it may be believed that under these circumstances sentiment had little to do with the lady's hopes and fears, yet she was not the less exceedingly desirous of so fascinating the prince as to prevent him from leaving her. With this view she determined on administering to him, if possible, a love-philtre. And on looking about for the means of giving it him, she bethought herself that her maid was an intimate friend of the cook of Alessandro Vitelli, the captain of the duke's guards, at whose table, as we may suppose, the prince was in the habit of occasionally sitting. This

[1] See note 12.

[2] Segni, vol. ii. p. 25.

maid, therefore, was directed by her mistress to carry a certain powder to her friend the cook, and beg him to find an opportunity of introducing it into some beverage to be offered to Alessandro. The whole conception of the scheme seems to be of a piece with the folly of the silly lady who concocted it.

Now the cook, less ignorant than the beautiful patrician dame, seems to have been an *esprit fort* to such a degree as to ridicule the whole notion of love-philtres. Perhaps he had experience of their inefficacy. He laughed at the business proposed to him by his friend the maid, but took the powder, and said that he would think about it. His thoughts, however, being only that the whole matter was a very good joke, he did not keep the fun to himself; and, naturally enough, those to whom he told the story were in their turn equally communicative to others.

Thus, from mouth to mouth, the good joke was not long in reaching the ears of the duke himself. And there, in the alembic of that close-shut and evil heart, the good joke became changed into matter of very different quality.

Humph! a powder to be secretly administered to him at the instigation of a woman in whose good graces Lorenzo Ridolfi was his rival! Why, this Lorenzo Ridolfi is Filippo Strozzi's son-in-law! The whole plot is plain!—love-philtre, indeed!—a plot to poison him, set on foot by the traitor Filippo—traitor once and traitor always!

Whether Alessandro really believed this, as is possible, —seeing that princes who are conscious that their death would be a people's deliverance are not unnaturally ever suspicious of secret practices against their lives — or, whether he only affected to believe it, as an opportunity of gratifying his hatred of Strozzi, which is, at least,

equally probable, the contemporary writers do not pretend to decide. His first step was to cause the cook to be seized and conveyed to a secret prison. Of course it would have been useless to apply any amount of torture to the unfortunate man to make him 'confess,' unless he knew what was the confession required of him. It was, therefore, asserted to him that he knew that Filippo Strozzi had frequently urged the Signora Alessandra Mozzi (such was the lady's name) to send her maid with a potion to him, that it might be secretly administered to the duke. And then a few turns of the rack—that sure presser forth of truth from the human heart—produced the 'confession' as desired.

Alessandro proposed on that evidence to arrest Strozzi at once. But Vitelli, his captain of the guard, alarmed at the possible result of so strong a measure (for the arrest of Filippo would have been the prelude to his immediate destruction at the hands of Alessandro), suggested that in a case of such importance it was absolutely necessary to consult the pope before taking any decisive step. That Filippo himself considered that his arrest would have led to his being immediately despatched in prison is proved by a letter from him to his correspondent Francesco Vettori, written from Bologna in 1537, in which he speaks of Vitelli having on this occasion saved his life.

Alessandro yielded unwillingly to the representations of Vitelli, and sent off his chamberlain, Girolamo da Carpi, one of the infamous ministers of his abominations, to Rome, with the whole statement of the case, and the papers of 'the proceedings.' Clement saw at once the utter absurdity of the whole charge, and felt that it would not be 'prudent' to condemn Filippo Strozzi to death on such grounds. He sent, however, for Jacopo Salviati,

a Florentine noble, of a family connected by various intermarriages with the Medici, and showing the papers to him, asked him what he thought of it. Though Salviati was no friend to Strozzi, 'as is usual between equals,' says Lorenzo the biographer, he nevertheless honestly answered that the whole story seemed to him utterly improbable; and strongly counselled the pope to send orders that no further steps should be taken in the matter, unless, indeed, the lady Alessandra should herself declare that Filippo had tampered with her as stated.

Alessandro was much disappointed at the return of his messenger with this decision. But seeing in Salviati's suggestion as to the lady's testimony a possibility of still attaining his object, he determined on trying the same method on her which he had practised on the cook. She was accordingly seized one night when her husband was absent, and carried to a lone building near the spot where the ducal stables are, between the convents of St. Mark and the Annunziata. There the twenty-years-old lover caused the object of his recent 'love' to be stripped naked and flogged till she should confess what was required of her. But with a constancy and honesty very remarkable, and by no means to have been expected of such a person as the lady Alessandra de' Mozzi, she maintained steadfastly that Strozzi had never spoken with her on any such subject. She was then placed on the rack by her lover; but still the agony did not produce the desired effect. The wretched creature, lying in the midst of her sufferings for truth's sake, protested in reply to every interrogation that only love for the man who was torturing her had induced her to take the imprudent step on which she had ventured. Her intention had been to secure to herself the advantages to be enjoyed by the preference of the tyrant.

But love for Alessandro! Even such a sentiment, or sensation rather, as ladies of the stamp of Alessandra de' Mozzi mean when they talk of love for Alessandro de' Medici! Bah! In his case nature had not practised the deceitful trick she sometimes does (rarely, though, without a sign of warning for those whose good instinct enables them to read it), by masking a hideous heart with a fair form. Alessandro, as the extant pictures and medals show with quite satisfactorily concurrent testimony, was as hideously ugly and mean in outward appearance as in inward reality. Passion plays strange freaks, it is true; but it is hardly credible that any human being, above all any woman, ever loved Alessandro de' Medici.

Perhaps the unfortunate Alessandra de' Mozzi imagined, not without reason, that if she confessed to having listened to propositions from Strozzi for the poisoning of her ducal lover, she should be sealing her own doom as well as his. At all events, she remained firm in her denial with wonderful constancy. The tormentors were baffled; and she had to be taken back to her home in such a condition that it was long before she could leave her bed. As for the cook, things followed with him quite their usual course in such cases, and he was never seen or heard of more.

Filippo had escaped; but it may be readily imagined that his position in Florence was not a very agreeable one under such circumstances. He received, indeed, secret information from a very trustworthy source, says his brother, 'which gave him clearly to understand that he would not be able to remain in Florence after the pope's death; and that even while Clement was living he was not altogether safe there.' But fortunately 'a pretext,' always necessary as usual, was at hand to account

for his absenting himself from the city. The pope and the emperor were to have a meeting at Bologna in December of that year, 1532; and Clement as usual wished that Strozzi should be present. His enemy Alessandro was to be there also; but under the eye of the pope, and still more under that of his redoubtable father-in-law the emperor, he would be upon his best behaviour. Not that it is to be supposed that either pope or emperor would have dreamed of interfering between a sovereign and his subjects. Though international law is held to be a modern science, it had progressed sufficiently far three hundred years ago for it to be perfectly understood that it was contrary to all propriety, etiquette, and good order for one sovereign to interfere between another and his people *for the sake of protecting, or at the prayer of the latter*. And the science certainly seems to stand at the selfsame point to the present day. Charles V. showed how perfectly he understood the doctrine of non-intervention, when the citizens on whom he had by force of arms and force of perjury imposed the despotism of Alexander, had the simplicity to lay their complaints against their tyrant before him. To crush the liberties of a people on behalf of their tyrant was to 'protect society,' watch over the 'sacred cause of order,' perform 'a duty to Europe.' But to help a trampled people to justice against their master was unwarranted intervention, in opposition to all public law.

Alessandro had in truth little to fear from any notice the emperor might take of crimes committed only against his own subjects. But the murder of the pope's banker might have been a serious thing; and Filippo felt that he might venture to appear at the great meeting of crowned heads at Bologna.

The matters of state which were transacted at this

conference do not fall within the sphere of our subject. A very few words may, however, give a tolerable notion of the pith of them. Clement lived in desperate dread of the threatened meeting of an ecumenical council, not only because of his own uncanonical election to the papacy, but because the council, it was feared, might mean reform, and reform for a pope meant, as the seventh Clement knew as well three hundred years ago as the ninth Pius knows to-day, annihilation. Charles V., on his part, feared that the pope was drawing nearer to the French king, and might, perhaps, contrive to ally himself by marriage with him. Under these circumstances the pope and the emperor strove by every possible means near at hand and farfetched to outwit and deceive each other. The churchman, as might be anticipated, succeeded in utterly taking in the layman. The marriage of Catherine de' Medici with the heir of France *was* planned and carried out; and the council was *not* held—at least not till Clement was where his legitimate or illegitimate birth was not of so much consequence.

And that was the upshot of the great lie-tournament of Bologna.

CHAPTER XI.

Settlement of accounts between the pope and Strozzi.—Strozzi as a pawnbroker.—Clement's projected journey into France.—Strozzi's return to Florence.—He undertakes the payment of Catherine's dower.—Finds funds for the erection of a fortress at Florence.—Strozzi as Nuncio in France.—The historian Segni's character of him.—His evil influence on Alessandro.—His letter from Paris.—His boast to the French nobles.—Story of Luisa Strozzi.—The ball.—The St. Miniato indulgence day.—The attack on Salviati.—Luisa's death.—Return of Strozzi to Italy.—Death of Clement.

At the end of the year 1532, when the Bologna congress was over, Filippo did not return to Florence, but accompanied the pope to Rome. He had still reason to believe that his life would not be safe from the machinations of Alessandro in the former city; and he was moreover anxious, his brother tells us, to settle his long current accounts with the Holy See, so far as to make it possible for him to leave both Rome and Florence at a minute's notice if it should become necessary. This settlement of accounts turned out to be no very easy matter, as might indeed have been expected from the nature of the apostolic debtor. Clement raised every sort of difficulty, although, says Lorenzo, Filippo's accounts were perfectly clear and straightforward. They were, however, at last settled on Strozzi's consenting to 'relinquish all the interest which had accrued to him through a long series of years, and which amounted to no less than fifty thousand crowns.' And here again we have to remark on the enormous amount of

the reiterated losses which the great banker's biographer records as having been suffered by him. We have not yet heard nearly the last of them; and yet the wealth he accumulated and left behind him at his death was immense. The only supposition is, that the profits among his various transactions of all kinds must have been enormous. His accounts with Clement may have been 'clear and straightforward;' and yet it may have been that the pope was on this occasion at least acting with no injustice in insisting on the striking out of all demands for interest. It is impossible to imagine any other cause for Strozzi's life-long and all-enduring servility to Clement, for his untiring acquiescence in all his demands, and his apparent forgetfulness of the gross and repeated injuries he received from him, except on the supposition that he made directly or indirectly an immense profit by his holiness. If he did not get this, he certainly got nothing else by his long and dangerous service of the Medici. He was constantly treated with contumely and injury by them; the hope of preferment held out to him for his son was never realized. He was designedly put forward to do all the most dirty and dangerous work they had to do in that dirty and dangerous undertaking—the establishment of despotic government in Florence. He was driven from that city by fear for his life from the hatred of one of the brood. Worst of all, his little bill was disputed, and his charge knocked off. And yet he was always accommodating, always acquiescent, always ready to open another account, and come forward with fresh advances in every new need; always suffering immense losses with angelic resignation; and accumulating a colossal fortune all the while.

Or is it rather to be supposed that cunning, cautious, and avaricious Clement perfectly knew how to take care

of himself; and that the *quid pro quo* which paid the banker for all his compliances and all his losses is to be found, not in the profit he made by his transactions with the sovereign, but by those which he was by favour permitted to carry on with the subject? Was it in this case, as usual, the people who paid for all? Did the understanding between heaven's vicegerent and his banker, indecorously translated into plain language, stand thus: 'If I, the holy father, allow you to re-shear the flock first duly shorn by me, I shall expect so far to share in the clippings as to have my own little bills discounted without any very exact reckoning respecting the days on which they may fall due'? No shadow of a hint that such was in reality the state of the case falls from the admiring fraternal biographer. But from the letters published for the first time by Signor Bigazzi, as illustrations to Niccolini's tragedy, there may be picked out some curious scraps of revelation which seem to point, in at least one instance, very clearly to such a conclusion.

From one of these letters, written to Francesco Vettori at Florence from Rome, on the 4th of June, 1533, we get some very tell-tale peeps at a scheme formed by the great capitalist for the establishment of a monster pawnbroking business; a '*Monte di Pietà*,' or 'Charitable Fund,' as it proposed to be, and as similar establishments are still called on the continent of Europe. The charitable pretext, and the real object, are wonderfully grouped together in the wealthy banker's mention of the scheme to his confidential correspondent. He calls it a 'Monte di Pietà,' which, for the advantage of the citizens, should lend money at ten per cent. on pledges up to the amount of twenty-five or thirty ducats, so that by this means an end may be put to the roguery and extortion from which so many victims suffer to their great loss every day; and

the door be shut against the Jews once and for all. Now it is exceedingly likely that the Christian and Jew money-lending extortioners into whose hands the needy fell in Florence in those days, treated them in such a manner as to make the great banker's regular and respectable ten per cent. pawn-shop seem a great boon. But in order to understand the matter aright, and to appreciate the beauty of the following passage in Strozzi's letter, it must be remembered that the Church at that time considered—and I fancy still considers, for is she not infallible, and, consequently, immutable?—that all usury, or accepting, or charging of interest for the use of money, is a deadly and damnable sin. The very slow and gradual progress of enlightenment on this subject forms one of the most curious chapters of the growth of opinion. But, as in many other more or less analogous cases, it may be questioned whether the Church of Rome, in its unbending and thorough-going prohibition, was not less illogical, and altogether untenably absurd, than the legislation of modern times on the same subject, which, obfuscated in its comprehension of the matter by the remains of the old orthodox ideas, and yet driven onwards by the inevitable necessities of modern commercial life, sought to establish a compromise between the two, by fixing a lawful rate of interest, which necessarily was an erroneous and therefore unjust and pernicious rate in the great majority of cases.

In Italy, and in the sixteenth century, where the law of the church was that of the state also, the lending of money at interest was of course as illegal as it was sinful. And we can hardly wonder that a pope should find it go against his conscience to pay fifty thousand dollars of interest on moneys lent to himself. But let us see what his holiness says to the subject when the charitable ten

per cent. loan fund, that shall cut the Jews out of the market for ever, is proposed for the advantage of his subjects.

'Notwithstanding his holiness a few days ago,' writes Strozzi, 'when speaking on the subject before two or three persons, condemned the thing, yet when I spoke to him about it afterwards, when nobody was by (*remotis arbitris*, writes the scholarly banker in Latin), he yielded and consented. He will have nothing to do with it, as to giving public authorization; but it is sufficient for our purpose that his holiness lets us do what we want, and does not hinder us.' For I explained to him that I did not speak to him on the subject from any scruple of conscience, nor from any idea of asking him for absolution in the matter, either beforehand or afterwards; but only that, seeing that his holiness is lord of the city, it seemed to me decent and due to him not to propose or bring forward any scheme without first communicating it to him.'

I wish I could place an engraving on the opposite page which should represent this interview, *remotis arbitris*, between the banker and the pope, with all due physiognomical expression and illustration. Was the official gravity quite preserved when the man of money—that same Filippo Strozzi who in old days used to be so intimate with the Cardinal Giulio as often 'to sleep in his little bed with him'—'explained' to the pope that he had no intention of troubling his holiness professionally for any turn of his office in the way of easing his, Filippo Strozzi's, conscience in this matter of the ten per cent. (or any other)? Did no covert smile pass between the two men who knew each other so well? But, apart from this, is it not a queer bit of sixteenth-century life, this proposition to a pope to be allowed to commit systemati-

cally a damnable sin, made unobjectionable to the apostolic father by the explanation that the sinner will never ask him for absolution, seeing that he has no scruple of conscience on the matter?

The writer goes on to explain to his correspondent that he proposes three establishments, of which two should lend at seven and a half per cent., to be eventually, when the profits shall have so accumulated as to justifiy such a step, reduced to five. Of course some unexplained disadvantages attended the transactions at these reduced rates. Otherwise the establishment of different rates in the same city would be unintelligible, as the ten per cent. shop would hardly thrive by the side of one belonging to the same capitalist, and doing business at seven and a half. Then he further proposes to establish a bank in Pisa, which should make advances at ten per cent., and receive deposits on which it would pay five per cent.; 'or rather, I would use all diligence to obtain them at four per cent., in which I think we should succeed, seeing that there is now no place of deposit in that city. And many women and minors would give us their money at any rate of interest, however low, rather than leave their capital dead and unprofitable.'

Now it certainly does not require any very profound insight into the mysteries of money-dealing to understand that a monopoly of the forbidden sin of lending money at interest, at ten, seven and a half, or even five per cent., in a large commercial city, would be 'a very good thing;' or that a business consisting of receiving the property of women and children at four, and lending it out on pledge at ten per cent., would be likely to pay a good dividend.

Turning to other matters, the letter, as well as another written a few days previously to the same correspondent,

speaks of the pope's intention of accompanying his[1] kinswoman Catherine into France, for the solemnization of her marriage with the second son of Francis I. It will be remembered that Charles V. had gone from the meeting at Bologna in the persuasion that no such marriage would be realized. It seems from these letters of Strozzi, that all the advisers whom Clement most habitually trusted had sore misgivings as to the ultimate success of this attempt 'to satisfy France,' as Filippo says, 'without provoking Cæsar.' 'He,' Clement, 'is alone,' he writes, 'in this opinion. For Jacopo Salviati, Guicciardini, and every one thinks ill of it. But he will have it so, and that's enough.'

Then follows a passage, from which it would appear that Strozzi believed that Duke Alessandro's feelings towards him were very much changed, since scarcely a year ago he dared not for his life remain in Florence. The passage is curious too in other respects.

'My friend,' he writes to Vettori, 'I see plainly that the settling of my accounts will cause more delay than I had thought; more from the fault of those employed on the examination of them than from any fault of mine. For I have cleared up every difficulty that has been objected to; and that because I am anxious to return to Florence as soon as possible. For I am on thorns[2] here, and should think myself in paradise there. I wish you would see his excellency the duke, and in my name beg him to assist my departure hence, by writing to his ambassador, Benedetto Buondelmonti, and ordering him to hurry my return; on the ground that he, the duke, has need of me, or respecting those affairs of the *Monte di Pietà*, or any other more colourable pretext you can think of. The ambassador will immediately send for me,

[1] See note 13. [2] 'In croce.'

to urge me to hurry my going. I shall say that it only depends on the pope to give orders that my business may be despatched; and thus the ambassador will become solicitor for me to his holiness. But he, Buondelmonti, must not know that it is all done by my own desire; otherwise he would not act as he would if he thought that the duke had really need of me. Commend me much to his excellency, the duke, and beg him not to fail in rendering me this assistance. Otherwise, I shall have to remain here till August. And as I shall have to accompany the pope to Nice, I should thus be unable to be at Florence for a long time. And this would be exceedingly prejudicial to my interests, as well in respect to my love affairs as to other matters.'

It appears that Strozzi succeeded in returning to Florence some time before he was obliged again to leave it on the expedition above alluded to. The exact date of his return is not recorded. He was intrusted by Clement with the honourable commission of making all arrangements for the departure of Catherine from Florence, and taking charge of her on the journey to Nice, where he proposed to join them, and thence to Marseilles. The distinguished position thus assigned to Strozzi gave no little umbrage, and raised no little jealousy, Lorenzo Strozzi assures us, in those who had hitherto had charge of the young lady. But a very sufficient reason for the pope's preferring to avail himself of the services of his good friend and banker upon the occasion is very soon discoverable. Clement deigned to add that he 'intended to avail himself of Strozzi's credit to secure the payment to the French of the dower agreed on.' He promised that Filippo should be in his turn secured in a proper manner, and that he would always remember the service thus rendered him.

Now this dower was nothing less than a hundred and

thirty thousand crowns, to be paid in ready cash; a very large sum, not much inferior probably to half a million sterling at the present day. A French king's son was not to be had for a daughter of the upstart merchant princes of Florence for nothing. Charles V. could not persuade himself that Francis would consent to such a misalliance. And our Henry VIII., when consulted on the point by his brother monarch, instructs his ambassador Rochefort to represent to the French king, that a match with such 'low rank, blood, and family' could not be recommended, unless, indeed, the 'profit, commodity, and advantage' to be realized by it was very considerable;[1] a truly royal manner of considering the subject, in which the chivalrous Francis perfectly coincided.

Strozzi as usual consented; and undertook the payment of this huge sum within the year. 'Filippo knew well,' his brother remarks, 'the astuteness of his holiness by long experience; in a great degree,' he adds, implying that no length of experience would suffice to fathom it entirely. 'Thinking, however,' he goes on, 'that his services and good deeds might avail to overcome the pope's ungrateful nature, he professed himself perfectly ready to meet all his wishes.' The reader may judge for himself whether Filippo Strozzi was moved to disburse a hundred and thirty thousand crowns in the hope of at last moving Clement to gratitude by his kindness, or rather by the expectation of amply repaying himself for the risk, by being allowed to follow his own devices in those little matters respecting which the pope and he so well understood each other when once they discussed them '*remotis arbitris.*'

But this payment of Catherine's dower was by no means the only demand made by his Medicean connections

[1] State Papers, Henry VIII., vol. vii. p. 428.

on Filippo Strozzi's apparently inexhaustible resources. When Clement graciously assigned to him the honour of conducting the Medicean heiress into France, he left him to make all the arrangements and provide for the expenses of the expedition; all which was done, his brother assures us, on no stinted scale of magnificence. But this was a small matter in comparison with other demands made on him in the spring and summer of that year (1533).

It was quite in the usual and natural order of things that the due and decorous establishment of despotism in Florence should require the erection of a fortress to keep that turbulent city in order. What is an absolute sovereign, who was 'to be master, and do as he pleased,' without a fortress? especially when he pleased to do such things as Alessandro and most of his successors have done! How rule without a fortress, when it is only by means of one that the people can with any efficacy be fired upon? So it was decided to endow Florence with a fortress, after the fashion of other right-divine-ruled cities. And for this too our faithful and well-beloved banker had to find by far the greater part of the funds. The site was after due deliberation chosen where the Faenza gate then stood, between the Bologna and the Prato gates: the huge building was raised and piously dedicated to the city's patron saint, John the Baptist. And there the hideous brick walls, with their barracks and cannon have stood, from that day to this duly doing the duty for which they were erected, till at last the wholly unforeseen case arises of the human part of the fortress machinery refusing to do its functions. Troops decline to fire on the people! And suddenly, after three hundred years of admirably successful fortress-government, Strozzi's cash ceases to be of any avail; the fortress is a dumb unavailing lump of bricks and earth, governmental system col-

lapses, and astounded divine right vanishes over the Apennine horizon.

No such danger in the good old times! Strozzi came down with his cash. The fortress was built with all speed. Florence found herself bridled. And the Medici felt safe to do as they pleased.

It was on the first of September, 1533, that Strozzi left Florence for Nice in attendance on 'the ducchessina,' as Catherine was then called. And in the course of the same month Clement left Rome to meet them there. Thence the united parties proceeded by sea to Marseilles, which they reached on the 11th October; on the 28th of which month the marriage was solemnized. Clement returned shortly afterwards to Rome; and Filippo purposed returning with him, being especially anxious, says his brother, to look after the due assignment of the securities to be given him for the money advanced for Catherine's dower. But Clement expressed to him his wish that he should remain for a few months as apostolic nuncio in France; 'alleging,' writes Lorenzo, 'that it appeared to him desirable that some person of more than ordinary importance and distinction should fill that post, now that he had contracted such close relationship with the king. Filippo,' continues the biographer, 'represented to him that it would be exceedingly prejudicial to his affairs,[1] and to his family, left without his care, to undertake this duty; but that his anxiety to be of service to his holiness outweighed with him every other consideration. He was, however, secretly exceedingly pleased that Clement should thus manifest his confidence in him; thinking it possible that, by reason of the important services he

[1] It is not to be supposed, however, that this mission was purely honorary. We find from an extant book of accounts of Filippo's, that he received from the apostolic chamber 1050 golden crowns for his salary as nuncio for seven months.

had so recently performed, his holiness might not be this time deceiving him. He was also well pleased to have an opportunity of making himself agreeable to the king; and, —which was of still more importance to him,—to have a safe and honourable reason for remaining away from his own country.'

So Strozzi went to Paris in the suite of Francis; and we have no difficulty in believing the statement of his brother, that he and Francis I. got on very well together. The two men were well suited to each other; and the statement is creditable to neither of them. Strozzi had probably less completely thrown away the good gifts of intelligence and quickness of mind with which both of them had been endowed by nature. He was no doubt the better instructed and more educated man. But both had sufficient brightness to appreciate and enjoy the brightness of the other. They were equally 'men of pleasure,' as the phrase goes; men, that is to say, who had never attained any perception of the fact that it was desirable that the appetites of their bodies should be ruled and restrained by their higher faculties. Each had unbounded tolerance for any intolerable amount of swinish profligacy in the other; and though it is just to observe, that history gives no warrant for charging Francis with some of the more revolting and degrading forms of vice, which a cynical word or two of some of the contemporary writers too clearly attribute to the Italian debauchee, yet a total emancipation from all those ties, restraints, and sanctions which the world around them recognized and reserved, and which they themselves were more or less obliged to make an outward show of regarding, formed that strong bond of community between them which unites men who hold a faith or no-faith in common, in the midst of a society extraneous to their private

system of creed and practice. The king and the ambassador were united by the freemasonry of a certain degree of talent joined with the most unblushing lawlessness of profligacy. So when after six months stay in France, Strozzi wished to return to the superintendence of his affairs in Italy, Francis would not let him go, but applied to the pope to refuse him permission to quit his post.

The nearly contemporary historian, Segni, attributes the employment of Strozzi by the pope on his embassy to his desire to keep him out of Florence. The pope, says Segni, 'feared his too great power in that city, accompanied as it was by excessive wealth, by large connection, by rank, by the support of a large family of promising sons, and by his own remarkable qualities. For many valuable qualities were united in that man in a very high degree, although they were, in the judgment of strict men, obscured not a little by certain vices. For Filippo, extremely clever as he was, and by nature disposed to satire and sharp sayings, was wont to mock at religion as he did at other things. He would even do this at the table of Clement himself, notwithstanding his sacred character. He could never refrain from some sneering scoff, which not only brought the charge of impiety on himself, but was injurious also to the reputation of the pope. Filippo, in consequence of depraved habits acquired in youth, was excessively licentious in his life; and that in such unpardonable sort as caused him to be deemed by the majority and the better sort of men a shameless profligate. And this was all the more the case from his habit of concealing nothing, but speaking of such matters openly to everybody. It was also laid to his charge that he was very little scrupulous as to the means used by his agents for increasing his gains. But his dexterous cleverness, his kindness to his friends, his gene-

ral affability were such, that, notwithstanding his great vices, he was a brilliant man. Many indeed attributed his faults themselves to easy good humour and a joyous temperament, rather than to malignity or an evil mind.'

The degree in which such a man was received as a friend and associate among his equals, and the amount, not only of toleration, but of high consideration and admiration in which he was held by them, compared with the social position which would be awarded to one stained by similar vices, however high his rank and great his wealth in our own day, furnishes an instructive measure of the moral advance which has been achieved during these three centuries by mankind.

According to the same trustworthy historian who has left us the above character of Filippo Strozzi, Clement had really good reasons for wishing to keep him away from Florence. The sort of life led there by Alessandro has been in some imperfect degree described. Now Segni[1] says that Alessandro would in his government 'have in a great degree satisfied the claims of justice, inasmuch as he treated little and great impartially, and willingly lent ear to the poor,' had it not been that he was diverted from all such good intentions by dissipation and the evil counsel 'especially of Filippo Strozzi.' In another place,[2] he declares that the young duke was designedly incited to dissipation and profligacy by Strozzi. Filippo and his sons, he declares, were the companions of his excesses and debaucheries. In another passage he represents the wealthy banker in that most detestable of all characters, a middle-aged experienced profligate, living amid a knot of young men, of whom the duke and *his own sons* were the chief, and using the authority

[1] Vol. ii. p. 19. lib. vi. [2] Vol. i. p. 337, lib. v.

and greater knowledge due to his years to lead them and instruct them in the science of vice. Now we are justified in believing of Pope Clement, that his moral nature was not likely to be much offended by any such matters. But his holiness was a prudent and especially a decent man, who valued respectability. And the tidings that reached him of the mode of life of Alessandro in Florence gave him much annoyance, and drew from him frequent admonitory letters to the young duke. He might therefore not unreasonably wish on these grounds to keep Filippo away from Florence.

We have one letter extant, written by Filippo to the same correspondent, Francesco Vettori, during his stay in France. It is dated from Paris, the 6th July, 1534.

After saying how much it had pained him that Vettori should have thought it necessary to enter on a justification of himself to him respecting certain accounts, he continues, 'Truly, friend, my boat was never before so hardly bestead among the rocks as it has been this last winter. I have had three great sources of anxiety, each of which by itself would have been intolerable enough;—first, the provision contract at Rome;—secondly, the superintendence of the Florence corn market;—and thirdly, the payment of the dower of our duchessina.' The last of these troubles we know all about. Of the first we shall hear more anon. As to the office at Florence of which Filippo here complains, the holders of it were called the '*Ufiziali dell' Abbondanza.*' They were eight in number, had authority over the bakers, and all matters connected with their trade, and were obliged to buy grain for the consumption of the city, under circumstances which seem often to have left them very considerable sufferers by the operation. In the letter we are speaking of, Filippo goes on to say,

that he positively must decline serving another year in company with his present colleagues, who had left him to bear alone all the weight of the loss.

But the prudent man does not reckon among his troubles a certain little conversation he had had with some bragging French nobles a little while before, which proved in the sequel a far more serious misfortune to him than any of those he speaks of. Large as was Catherine's dower, some of the Frenchmen who had business with Strozzi respecting the receiving of it, joked the rich Florentine as to the insufficiency of it to make up the difference between a daughter of the Medici and a son of the King of France. Upon which Filippo, who surely must have left his much-vaunted prudence behind him in cautious Florence, boasted that the jewels which Clement would shortly add to her dower would make her a rich match for any king. And when asked what these jewels were to be, answered that they were Genoa, Milan, and Naples. A rasher or more unfortunate word was never spoken. Kings have long arms; and their ears reach further still. Those of his most Cathólic majesty Charles V. heard Strozzi's boast, treasured it up, and never forgave it, when Filippo would have given all the amount of Catherine's dower, and the Florence losses on the corn provisionment, and much more besides, to have it forgotten or forgiven.

Other troubles moreover were brewing in Florence, while the brilliant nuncio was dazzling the eyes of the French court by his magnificent dissipation at Paris.

It so happened that in the spring of 1534, Guglielmo Martelli, one of the Duke Alessandro's favourites and companions, gave a great supper and ball on the occasion of his marriage. These suppers, with balls, generally masked, after them, which were kept up till morning,

were the favourite amusements of Alessandro, and of the set with whom he lived. And from the few words of description let fall here and there by the historians Varchi and Segni, it is abundantly clear that these revels were not such as any tolerably well-conducted woman, according at least to our notions of such matters, could have frequented. Segni especially speaks of the enormous and lavish extravagance, on a scale quite unprecedented in Florence, which characterized them. Six or seven thousand scudi, he says, were constantly spent on a night's festival; and he instances two or three cases in which the cost amounted to ten thousand.

But while representing the nature and results of these orgies to have been such as is above alluded to, they tell us in the same page that all or nearly all the most beautiful young women among the Florentine patricians used to frequent them. Filippo Strozzi's daughter Luisa, recently married to Luigi Capponi, was among these. It would have been highly improbable that a daughter of Filippo, and sister of Piero and Vincenzo Strozzi, should have been among the few whose strictness of manners led them to abstain from such amusement. But we are assured that Luisa, though sufficiently fond of pleasure to accept every invitation of the kind, was perfectly correct in conduct and unblemished in character.

She was at the ball given by Martelli; as was also Alessandro, 'in the costume of a nun,' who brought thither with him one Giuliano Salviati, a man of notoriously infamous character. In the course of the night this man took occasion to accost Luisa 'with words and actions worthy of him, but not worthy of her,' as Varchi says. He was repulsed by her as he deserved. But in the morning, at the conclusion of the revel, 'when Luisa was about to mount her horse to return home,' he again

presented himself to her, and again insulted her in the same manner. She answered him with infinite scorn; 'but,' says Varchi, 'the matter might probably have ended there, had not Giuliano, not content with having used such discourtesy towards a lady, made a boast of having done so afterwards.'

Who that has ever seen Florence does not remember the hill of San Miniato, just outside its walls, and the two churches on it, and the ivy-clad remains of Michael Angelo's fortifications lying around them? Every visitor to Florence climbs the steep-paved cypress-bordered road, that leads to the top of the hill and the churches that crown it, for the sake of the lovely view from that spot of the city and valley of the Arno. But in 1534 every devout Florentine passed over those steep flagstones each Friday in March, to obtain that 'pardon for their faults, and remission of the punishment of all their sins,' as Varchi writes, which holy mother church had promised to such as should visit the churches on the hill-top on those days. Every devout Florentine, ay, and every gayest votary of pleasure; for the easy and convenient little pilgrimage was all the fashion. Nothing could be more opportune than remission of the punishment for all sins just about the end of the carnival; and perhaps it was the mode to have great need of the whitewashing. At all events, the scene of this devout excursion is represented to have been more like a fair than anything else. The dealers in knick-nacks, and ladies' gear of all sorts, used to erect stalls by the side of the path all the way up. 'For many ladies as they return from the churches stop to look at the goods which the dealers have brought, and frequently to make some purchase, which they send home by their maids or footmen. And hence knots of young men gather round these shops, to see the ladies return from

their pilgrimage; and joke with those they are acquainted with as they pass, or stop to make their purchases.'

Now it so happened, that shortly after the outrage that has been related was offered by Giuliano Salviati to Luisa Strozzi, on the occasion of one of these March Fridays, Luisa, descending the hill from the churches, passed before Giuliano, who was standing in the same knot of young men with her brother Lione, who was a knight of Jerusalem, and generally called the Prior of Capua. The presence of her brother did not prevent the ruffian from again persecuting his victim in the grossest manner. Whereupon 'the Prior, who heard him, said, "I do not know, Giuliano, if you are aware that that is my sister." To which he replied, that he knew it perfectly well; but that that was no reason she should be exempted from what all women were made for.'

The Prior made no answer; but turned away in great wrath and agitation. And on the 13th day of that month of March, as Salviati was returning home late at night, he was attacked by three men, who wounded him in the face, and very badly in the leg, and left him lying in the street.

Alessandro was exceedingly enraged at this offence to his favourite, and caused the magistrates to use all possible means for the discovery of the assassins. Of course under the circumstances suspicion fell on the Strozzi. And the Prior and two of his friends were arrested, and afterwards his elder brother Piero. But no evidence could be obtained against either of the prisoners. It was a question with the magistrates whether the prisoners ought to be put to torture. It was urged, however, that as this was only a case of 'one private citizen being wounded by another, and that in an ordinary place, not in a church, or in the great square, or in the market-place,' the number of days

which the accused had passed in prison was a sufficient punishment, especially as there was no evidence whatever of their guilt. Several more days were nevertheless added to their imprisonment while this point was being debated. For the real question with the magistrates, put into its true form, was simply this. His excellency the duke is very desirous of wreaking his hatred on these Strozzi. It would be very agreeable to him that they should be put to the torture. But can we venture to gratify him in this respect? These Strozzi after all are very large game. They tried hard to obtain from Piero Strozzi either such admissions as would have justified them in assuming the probability of his guilt, or, failing this, some clear proof of his innocence, which should equally make their course in the matter plain. But when he was ordered to commit to writing an entire statement of his defence, and the paper returned by him in obedience to this demand was opened in full conclave, it was found to contain only a sonnet, exceedingly derisive of the board, and abusive of their president, one Ser Maurizio, the chancellor, a worthless creature of Alessandro, and the instrument of his hatreds and persecutions. The difficulties of the puzzled magistrates were however brought to an end by a letter from Clement, ordering that the young men should be released, and that nothing more should be said about the affair. Cautious Clement, like a genuine churchman, was ever for hushing up, avoiding scandal, as the greatest of evils, covering over all ugly things with a decorous mantle of silence—and as for punishment, or vengeance—why, he was for letting that be silent, secret, and decorous also.

But neither Alessandro, nor Giuliano Salviati, who came out from a long confinement to his sick-room maimed and limping for life, were satisfied to let their enemies thus escape. And Piero Strozzi felt that it was not intended

that he *should* escape. He endeavoured to set himself right with Giuliano by an extrajudicial and friendly declaration, that he was innocent of all complicity in the injury which had been done to him. But it was of no use. Alessandro and Giuliano both knew that if the Strozzi had, which was scarcely credible, known nothing of that night attack, it was not less certain that they had abundant reason for vengeance on the gross and public insulter of their sister and themselves. At last Piero went to the duke, and told him, while still protesting his innocence, that it was impossible for him to continue exposed to the plottings against his life which were going on; that he must beg to have the privilege of carrying arms, which was enjoyed by Salviati, extended to him also; or if his excellency would not do him that justice, he must request the duke's permission to leave Florence.

To this Alessandro answered that he might do so as soon as he pleased, and go where he pleased. The duke, we are assured by the historians, imagined that Strozzi would naturally require a day or two for preparing for a departure which the former supposed to be so unexpected. And he was fully determined to find in the course of that delay an opportunity for having him murdered. But Piero knew too well the man he had to deal with to give him any such chance. Immediately on leaving the duke he took post horses, and rode over the frontier into the Romagna, and thence went to meet his father in France.

By that time Filippo Strozzi was on his return to Italy. News of the rapidly failing health of Clement had reached Paris; and Francis I. immediately took measures to send to Rome all the French cardinals, to be ready to support French interest in the apparently imminent election of a new pope. He wished also that Strozzi should accompany them, thinking, as Lorenzo tells us, that his new friend

might be very useful to his interests in Rome on that occasion. Filippo himself also, as may be easily imagined, was not a little anxious to get back to Italy. There were Clement's pledges for the repayment of Catherine's dower, of which a large portion were still unredeemed. The question, above alluded to, of the Roman corn contracts was becoming very pressing and menacing. Then there was all this trouble about his sons and daughter in Florence, of which his letters from home were full. His presence was urgently needed on that account also. So Filippo was to accompany the French cardinals to Rome.

It was at Lyons, on his way thither, that he met his son Piero, and became clearly convinced from the tidings brought by him that Alessandro was fully determined 'not to suffer either him or his sons to exist in Florence.' Piero also brought the news that the pope's life was despaired of by the physicians.

Lorenzo Strozzi declares that Filippo had long before this made up his mind not to think of returning to Florence after the death of Clement. The 'long before' must, however, have been within the year. For it was little more than a year ago, in June 1533, that he was writing to Vettori of his anxiety to be at Florence, and asking the duke to favour his plans for returning thither. But it would seem that Alessandro had never ceased to hate Strozzi in the bottom of his dark and rancorous heart, since the old days when he had been, as a boy of sixteen, so humiliatingly conveyed out of Florence by Strozzi, and scolded out by his wife. While accepting the middle-aged banker's instructions in profligacy, while availing himself of his assistance in crushing the remains of liberty in Florence, and bridling the citizens with a fortress, while sitting at the same revels with him and his sons and daughters, while the prudent and astute senior flattered

himself that he was gaining the affections of his docile pupil in all mischief, the latter was feeding fat the old grudge carefully treasured in his heart, and only biding his time for the safe and complete gratification of it. This low-natured and despicable animal, Alessandro, showed himself more than a match for the cautious and experienced Filippo in dissimulation and cunning. Strange that men of any real power of intelligence should pride themselves on the possession of that vulpine quality of astuteness, in which any nobleness of feeling is a flaw, and in which they may be distanced by the superior secretiveness and falseness of a nature untouched by any such blemish in its baseness!

Filippo, having thus determined to return no more to Florence, was very well pleased, says his brother, to have good and assignable motives for openly breaking with Alessandro. 'For it appeared to him that in all cases whatsoever, and with whatsoever person one may have to do, it is desirable to have justifications;'—something that may with advantage be put forth before the world, that is to say, the colourable 'pretext' that our prudent Filippo was always so anxious about. But it was not yet time to bring forward the pretext he was so opportunely furnished with. It was necessary yet awhile to keep terms with the duke, 'in consideration of the large interests he had still at stake in Florence, and the great number of his debtors there, including both the public purse and private individuals.' So he wrote to the duke from Lyons in friendly terms, condoling with him on the state of Clement's health, and making no allusion to the recent treatment of his family.

But however convenient to Filippo the quarrel between his sons and the duke might be as a pretext for permanently quitting Florence, he might have been less con-

tented with it could he have foreseen the tragic ending of the incident. This did not happen till the December of the current year, 1534. But as no circumstance of the life of Filippo will lead our story back to it, the catastrophe may as well be told here.

Piero Strozzi and his brothers escaped in safety from Florence. But their sister Luisa, respecting whom all the trouble had arisen, remained with her husband in that city. It is remarkable that of this husband, Capponi, we hear nothing in the whole course of the story from beginning to end. The duty of defending and avenging the honour of a daughter of the house seems to have fallen wholly on her brothers, and in nowise on her husband. Such a circumstance, joined to other indications of manners, especially to the noticeable practice of continuing to call a married woman, especially among the higher nobility, by her original family name, instead of by that of her husband, is an evidence of that greater strength of the birth-tie than the marriage-tie, which modified so importantly all the relationships and modes of thinking in the old Italian society.

Tragedians, poets, and novelists have made the name at least of Luisa Strozzi world-famous. But the versions of her story which they have made popular cannot be relied on as affording historical information. The well-known novel of the late Professor Rosini, for instance, is an almost purely fictitious narrative, in which dates, places, and facts are tossed backwards and forwards, or invented according to the most arbitrary requirements of the novelist.

The certain facts of the matter may be told in very few words. On the 4th of December, 1534—about nine months, that is, after she was insulted at the ball by Giuliano Salviati—she supped—'joyously,' says Segni—in the house of her

sister Maria, the wife of Lorenzo Ridolfi. Within a few hours she was seized with excruciating pain; her body became swollen with great rapidity, and she died shortly after in extreme agony. A post-mortem examination *was ordered by her relatives;* and the physicians at once declared that she had been poisoned, and named the substance which had been used for the purpose.

This statement comprises all that can be known with *certainty* on the subject. But there can be *very* little doubt that Alessandro was the murderer. Varchi says that it was at first supposed that the poison had been administered by order of the duke; but that it was afterwards believed generally, 'from very clear grounds of conjecture,' that her own family had poisoned her, induced thereto by the fear that Alessandro purposed, 'by means of some treachery or fraud, to cast a stain on the honour of their family in the person of Luisa. For the unhappy and luckless young lady was full of high spirits, and went whenever she was invited, as did all the other ladies, to those revels that were given to please Alessandro.' But Varchi himself relates that the victim's body was opened for examination *by order of her relations;* a fact hardly to be reconciled with the supposition that they were the poisoners. And all the other authorities, especially Segni, agree in stating that Alessandro had followed up the repulse she had given to his friend Giuliano, by himself making dishonourable propositions to her, and that she was poisoned by the hand of the wife of Giuliano, a woman of utterly infamous character, by the order of the duke, in revenge for her rejection of his attentions;—an account of the matter altogether more probable than that of Varchi.

It is remarkable that no word of this sad story of Luisa Strozzi is to be found in the life of Filippo by his brother. He mentions, indeed, the attack on Giuliano Salviati, and

states briefly that the Strozzi brothers were suspected of having been guilty or it. But he says not a word of the reasons for fixing such suspicion on them; nor does he allude even to the tragical fate of Luisa. It can only be supposed that the whole subject was suppressed by him as tending to cast a slur on the honour of the family. Possibly his silence may be thought to add some probability to the hypothesis which accuses the family of the murder.

Filippo did not pass by Florence on his way to Rome. Travelling in company with eight French cardinals, he came by sea from Marseilles to Leghorn, and pushed on with all speed to Rome. But on his arrival, Clement VII. was dead.

He died on the 26th of September, 1534.

CHAPTER XII.

Interregnum at Rome.—Unpopularity of Strozzi.—Troubles come thick upon him.—Affair of Catherine's dower.—Affair of the corn contract. —Letter from Filippo to Francesco Vettori. — Embassy to Pope Paul III.—Second letter from the same to the same.—Demand for accounts.—Filippo's sons in Rome.—Third letter from the same to the same.—Hard times.—Attempts of Strozzi to deceive Alessandro. —Fourth letter from the same to the same.—Filippo's falsehood.— Upshot of the corn affair.

When Filippo reached Rome a few days after the death of Clement, he found the city, and his own affairs more especially, in a state that caused him the greatest anxiety. The period intervening between the death of one pope and the election of another, as has been before remarked, was always a time of more or less tumult and disorder. And upon this occasion matters were worse than usual. The intense hatred of the Romans for Clement showed itself in the most outrageous insults to his memory. Night after night the catafalque on which he lay was broken and defaced. On one occasion the body of the deceased pontiff was absolutely torn forth from its cerements, and was found in the morning transfixed with a sword. 'And it would have been dragged,' says Gregory da Casale, Henry VIII.'s ambassador, writing to the Duke of Norfolk, 'through the city with a hook, had it not been for respect for the Cardinal de' Medici'[1]

[1] State Papers, Henry VIII., vol. vii. p. 573.

(Ippolito). This hatred extended itself, as was usual when the late pope was not a Roman, to such countrymen of his as had been brought to Rome to share in the good things of the papacy. During the reigns of Leo and Clement, Rome had become almost a colony of Florence; almost every place of profit was in the hands of Florentines, and they were proportionately hated by the Roman populace.

Filippo Strozzi was especially obnoxious to the popular feeling. His brother would have us believe that this was due wholly to the known closeness of his connection with Clement, and to the general jealousy of the Florentines. But there can be little doubt that the rich banker had incurred a large share of odium on his own account. Men who make ten per cent. by administering to their less thrifty neighbour's needs, even though they save them thereby from the worse extortion of smaller and still more ruinous money-lenders, are rarely popular characters. The thrifty, clever, foreign banker had amassed vast wealth in one way or another at Rome; and in the state of feeling which then prevailed between one Italian city and another, that alone was quite sufficient to insure a considerable amount of popular hatred. Then, again, the vast contract for the supply of grain for the consumption of the city, of which more anon, let the upshots and rights of it have been what they may, was sure, even under the best circumstances, to discontent the ignorant populace, and bring down their resentment on the contractor.

But whatever the causes, the fact that the Roman populace availed themselves of the anarchical licence of the interregnum to manifest their especial enmity to Filippo Strozzi, in a quite pre-eminent degree, could not be denied by his biographer. The corpse of the wretched

dead pope, and the property of his surviving accomplice in so much evil were the principal marks for the fury of the interregnum rioters. Certain of Filippo's magazines of corn in the Trastevere quarter of the city had already been sacked and destroyed, and his agents had been obliged to seek shelter from the fury of the mob in the castle of St. Angelo, when he arrived. He himself found safety by being received into the Vatican. But every day there was talk among the mob who assembled in the Forum, of burning and razing to its foundations his house and bank.

Fortunately, the interregnum was not on this occasion a long one; and the election, when announced, was highly pleasing to the Roman people. The Cardinal Farnese, a Roman, a man whose faults were not of the kind which excite the hatred or contempt of the popular mind, and who, had he been neither pope nor priest, would have been a rather favourable specimen of the patricians of his day, was made pope as Paul III., on the 13th of October, 1534. Rome escaped, therefore, with only seventeen days of lawless saturnalia.

No change in any constituted human society is so great and sudden as that caused by the death of a pope and the election of his successor at Rome. It is a change which affects everybody, from the cardinal minister of state to the shoeblack who cleans the shoes of the second cousin of somebody who has some connection with the under-sacristan of a little chapel. And it is generally, and more still in those days was, not only a change, but a change from black to white, from east to west; a change that placed all that had been topmost undermost. Paul III. had sufficient wisdom to moderate the effects of this social cataclysm in a great degree, by not being in a hurry to make all the changes which had to be made. But it may

easily be conceived that Filippo Strozzi, with his vast and complicated business, his Florentine as well as his Roman interests all placed in new circumstances, his political as well as commercial affairs all disarranged, was in a position to be more affected by the change than almost any other individual.

In the first place there was sixty thousand crowns still due to him of the money he had advanced for Catherine's dower. Now it seems that the security which he received from Clement for the enormous sum required for that purpose consisted not of liens on property belonging to Clement personally, but entirely of certain assignments of church revenues and pledges of valuables belonging to the Holy See. It appears unaccountable that a wary and cautious man of business like Filippo should consent to accept such security for such a sum, more especially from an incumbent whose life was as bad a one as was Clement's at that time. Among the articles of value which he held was a magnificent diamond clasp, used for the fastening at the breast of the pope's cope when he officiated at the altar. It was the workmanship of Benvenuto Cellini, and is specially mentioned by him in his autobiography. He had also a variety of other jewels which were the property of the apostolic chamber. The assignment of church revenues for purposes so entirely belonging to the pope's personal affairs, as the endowing of his distant female relatives, could hardly be expected to be allowed to hold good under the administration of a successor. Still less was it to be supposed that the new pope would consent to leave movable property belonging to the see in the hands of his predecessor's banker; and the very chancy nature, therefore, of the security held by Filippo again suggests to us the existence of some exceedingly strong motive on the part

of the money-lender for such transactions, which does not appear on the face of them.

Paul demanded 'in an amicable manner,' says Lorenzo, 'that the jewels which ought never to have been pawned should be given up; but at the same time, with more liberality than could have been expected,—with more, indeed, than he had any right to use, according to modern notions of such matters,—consented that the sixty thousand crowns which still remained due to Strozzi should be paid out of the revenues on which Clement had charged them.' Filippo found his account, as his brother remarks, in acceding at once to the pope's wish that the jewels should be restored. For, says the biographer, he gained the new pontiff's good-will; and, as the sixty thousand were eventually all paid, he thought himself happily quit of the matter with the loss of only four thousand crowns, which ought to have accrued as interest on the sum from the time it was disbursed in France to the moment of repayment in Rome.

But the far more important affair of the corn contract still remained unsettled. The circumstances of the case were these:—in the preceding year, 1533, Strozzi's firm had made a contract to supply the public granaries of Rome with a very large quantity of grain to be bought in Sicily, and delivered in Rome by a certain day, *barring any impediment of an insuperable nature.* The corn was duly bought by Filippo's agents in Sicily, when unexpectedly Charles V.'s viceroy forbade the exportation of it. This, it might be thought, would have been deemed an insuperable impediment within the sense of the saving clause of the contract. But the firm thus baffled in Sicily proceeded to buy another supply in Brittany, and 'even in Flanders, a thing which can hardly have often happened before,' says Lorenzo. A portion, however, of

this new purchase was lost at sea ; a further part of it was detained in the countries it had to pass by, and the rest, by reason of the length of the transport, did not arrive in Rome in time for the fulfilment of the contract. Moreover, the great expenses on it necessitated its being sold at a very much higher price than had been agreed upon. The firm maintained, that having done their utmost to fulfil their contract, all these misfortunes amounted to a case of insuperable impediment; and it would have been at once admitted that they were freed from all responsibility by the clause in question 'if,' says Lorenzo, 'reason had been as strong as violence.' The city authorities, however, calculated the damage suffered by the city from the non-fulfilment of the contract at seven hundred thousand crowns, and sued Filippo for that huge sum.

'Filippo was above all else distressed,' writes his biographer, 'at the ruin which threatened his commercial firm from this cause ; since it appeared to him a blow which would destroy his credit throughout the world, and in a great measure blemish his good name and reputation. It seemed likely also to make it impossible for him to continue to live in Rome.' Under these circumstances, Strozzi determined at once not to contest the matter, but refer it, if possible, to arbitration. It was a tremendous thing, as his brother remarks, to place thus the whole of his vast fortune in the power of any two men. Yet it was his best resource ; and he succeeded after some difficulty in getting it referred to the two cardinals, di Trani and Ceserino, for arbitration.

The following letters, written to Francesco Vettori from Rome during this period of anxiety, will give an idea of the critical condition in which Strozzi was placed, and of his state of mind with respect to it. The expression of his sentiments with regard to Alessandro contrasts

strangely with what we already know from his brother's narrative to have been his real feeling and intentions respecting the duke. They are still more glaringly in disaccord with the political intrigues on which the busy banker-statesman was engaged, even during all the anxiety and trouble of the corn-contract litigation, and of which we shall have to speak in the following chapter. His correspondent, Vettori, was probably more intimately in his confidence than any other person; yet it seems from these letters that even to him Strozzi thought it prudent to say one thing while meaning something quite the contrary.

The following letter is dated, Rome, the 31st of October, 1534.

'My respected Friend,—In answer to your letter of the 20th, I find myself still weak from my recent illness; so much so that I can hardly trust my hand to hold the pen. I have asked my son Piero to write for me in reply to the more urgent parts of your letter: as to that concerning my making the oration to Pope Paul, I am fully aware that I should not be equal to such a task if I were in perfect health of body and mind; much less am I fit to undertake it now that in both of them I am grievously suffering. I therefore have declined that honour, that I may not disgrace myself, my country, and the duke altogether; and I doubt not that my very just excuses will be taken in good part by his excellency. For I am sure that if the duty in question be intrusted either to Palla Bucellai, or to Giovanni Corsi, either of the two could serve the duke much more effectually than I can. As for my making one of the embassy, nothing could please me more: as it appears to me that such an appointment would make it evident that his excellency considers me among his most trusted servants. It would

be the more acceptable to me because I have noticed that many men have doubts on this point, and indeed are inclined to think that the duke feels very differently towards me, founding their opinion on the fact that my sons were obliged to quit Florence because the influence of Giuliano Salviati was greater than theirs.'

When we come to speak of the political intrigues which Strozzi entered upon immediately on his arrival in Rome after Clement's death, we shall understand why this honour of being appointed one of the embassy sent according to custom to congratulate the new pope on his accession, with the additional distinction of being selected as the spokesman, was conferred by Alessandro on Filippo Strozzi. The duke was beginning to be alarmed at the machinations of the powerful capitalist, and would fain have become reconciled to him. But Filippo had already gone too far for any possibility to have remained of his returning to Florence while it was under the rule of its present master. He knew how far the professions of friendliness, and the 'let bygones be bygones' of Alessandro were to be trusted. And in little more than a month after the writing of this letter to Vettori, the tragic fate of his daughter Luisa came to add fresh fuel to his hate, and desire of vengeance on the docile pupil in profligacy, who now brought to his own hearth the dishonour and the sorrows which he had taught and prompted him to carry into the homes of so many others.

The letter goes on to say, that he could have wished that his correspondent had been named one of the ambassadors—they were five in number—sent to Rome on this occasion; as he should then have had an opportunity of consulting with him about the possibility of a reconciliation between his sons and Salviati. 'But failing this opportunity,' he writes, 'I have no hope of being able to

see you at Florence before next spring. For the arbitration to which I have consented, in the matter of my litigation with the city of Rome, and which has been referred to the Cardinals Trani and Cesarino, will not be settled for the next two months. And during this time, while my fortune is exposed to such a risk, it is impossible for me to quit this city. Moreover, besides this terribly important cause, I cannot abandon the recovery of the eighty thousand ducats paid by me to the King of France on behalf of Madame d'Orléans' (Catherine, now wife of the Duke of Orleans, afterwards Henry II.), 'part of which have been repaid me, and the rest is shortly due. And although it is true, that I have in my hands some securities, and a pledge or two' (not yet it seems delivered up to Paul), 'I am by no means certain as yet what turn the affair may take. For, though I have had, through third parties, nothing but good words from the new sovereign,' (Paul), 'yet I have not hitherto seen any effects from them. My fortune was never yet in such great danger. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that I should postpone all other matters, however important, to the above-mentioned affairs. I am very sorry that it must be so, for a little talk with you would, I am sure, make me understand the whole truth as to how matters stand' (in Florence), 'if so be that I in any degree misunderstand them. But for this we must wait, since you cannot come to me, and I cannot go to you, till these two matters are terminated.

'As for the good offices, which the duke has deigned to exercise on my behalf with Giuliano Salviati' (Alessandro, at the same time that he named Strozzi ambassador to Paul III., offered to use his influence to reconcile Strozzi with Salviati), 'I am given to understand that Giuliano speaks of me in the most friendly manner, and denies that he has ever done otherwise. But I know the

contrary to a certainty; and have the means of proving it irrefragably. But it is enough for me that his excellency has spoken on the subject as he has. For whenever I make up my mind to come to Florence, I shall request the duke to take the assurance of that man that he will not be guilty of any offence against me. Without such precaution I would not come; nor do I think that you would advise my doing so. But since Giuliano, as I understand, tells the duke that he would not harm me, even if he found me sleeping; if the duke were to answer, that, trusting to such assurance, he had bidden me to come to Florence on the security of his' (the duke's) 'word, I do not see how the man could devise any mischief or loose himself from the pledge given. Should the duke object to acting thus, it would give me ground for suspicion that his excellency was not in fact desirous that I should return to Florence. I, for my part, am, and always shall be, anxious and most ready to satisfy every wish of his, postponing thereto all consideration of advantage or honour to myself. That his excellency loves me, I doubt not, and have never doubted. On the contrary, it is my opinion that the affection and kindness which he has shown me have led my enemies, fearing that my influence with his excellency was greater than their own, to strive in every way to get my sons into disgrace with him, by calumniously charging them with deeds they never did or dreamed of doing, in the hope of making discord between his excellency and me by their means. For they knew too well that it was hopeless to endeavour to sow similar jealousies between the duke and me; and they have thus chosen the time of my absence to attempt it by means of my sons. But I trust that the whole truth will eventually become known to his excellency; and that my good deeds will have power to outweigh the malignity of

my enemies. And as it is still a fatigue to me to write, I will not say more on this subject.'

But the curious question is, why on earth did he write so much? What was the object that induced the sick man, harassed with all the pressing anxieties he has been recounting, suffering, as he says, in mind and body, to weave all this mass of falsehood in writing too to a confidential correspondent? How grossly false were all these assertions of his belief in Alessandro's good feeling towards him, and of his devotion to the duke, we well know; and it is difficult to imagine that Vettori was not equally aware of them. Of the intrigues in which Strozzi was, even at the time of writing this letter, engaged for the destruction of Alessandro, Vettori was probably as yet ignorant. And it can only be supposed that all this elaborate dissimulation was intended to blind his correspondent to what he was now about. Or may it have been that the letter was intended to reach the eye of Alessandro, and was intended to deceive him in the same manner that he had striven to throw Strozzi off his guard by nominating him as one of his ambassadors? The subsequent conduct of Alessandro, which the next chapter will have to narrate, leads one to suppose that his object was simply to beguile Filippo into trusting himself, if only for a day or two, in Florence; being well determined that he should never leave it alive. And the statesman-banker's designs with regard to 'his excellency' were not less deadly, though less direct and simple.

The letter concludes thus:—

'I am very glad to hear that the affairs connected with the magistracy of 'Abbondanza' are nearly settled. For, added as they were to all the other weight that is pressing on me, they have given me much disturbance. I know well how efficacious your assistance has been in

winding up these accounts; and I thank you in my own name, and in that of Piero Salviati' (his colleague in that magistracy). 'Our friend Francesco del Nero is still treasurer; but will remain so, I fancy, but few hours, or days at all events. For the coronation of Paul is to take place on the 4th' (of November, that is: it was in fact celebrated on the 7th); 'and it is probable that del Nero's successor will then be named. I do not know if the persecution of him will end here. If it does I shall think him let off cheaply. He does not fear any further molestation; and seems inclined, as soon as he is his own master, to visit Venice. For these attacks are alarming everybody. For the present I have nothing more to add than my prayer that God may grant you a long and happy life, and may liberate me from all these grievous troubles.

'Your friend,

'PH. STROZZI.'

The treasurership held by the Florentine Francesco del Nero must have been, not that of treasurer general to the apostolic chamber, which up to the death of Clement was held by Strozzi himself, but some more subordinate office. The 'persecutions' and 'attacks' alluded to are evidently demands for accounts of his office; and it is instructive to be told by Filippo Strozzi that in the papal court such attacks alarmed everybody. It cannot be doubted that such demands were very alarming.

It may be noticed that Filippo signs himself 'Ph.,' using the Latin and not the Italian form of the name, Philippus.

The next letter to the same correspondent, dated Rome, 28th of November, shows us Filippo still harassed by a multiplicity of troubles and difficulties. In fact, his

life henceforward was made up of little else. From the time of Clement VII.'s death, his prosperous and happy days were well-nigh over. Notwithstanding the long jangling warfare of mutual lies and deceptions between him and the pope, Strozzi was politic, it would seem, in sticking to Clement, and submitting to be plundered by him *à discrétion*. With such a pope to deal with, he contrived to open the world, his oyster, pretty successfully, and to avoid most of the whips and scorns of fate. When his old accomplice, patron, and enemy was gone, the prosperous banker had thenceforward but a stormy, baffling, and troubled time of it.

'HONOURED FRIEND,' he writes again about a month after the date of the previous letter—

'In addition to the anxieties and labour brought upon me by the affair of the dower of Madame d'Orléans, and the litigation respecting the corn contract, new troubles are continually arising. For now the apostolic chamber has published an edict, commanding in the most stringent terms every one who has in any way had ecclesiastical revenues in his hands during the papacy of Clement, to present their accounts anew.'

New troubles indeed! and very serious ones, as it may be apprehended. Filippo's mind did not misgive him for nothing about these 'persecutions,' which alarmed everybody.

'They are determined,' he proceeds, 'to re-examine and rebalance all the accounts, notwithstanding they have once been audited and settled—a most troublesome business, and calculated to cause infinite difficulties to all parties concerned. Then again, the heirs of Domenico di Massimo are bringing an action against me, on account of a security for two thousand ducats, which they assert I gave to their father for Clement, for completing the

purchase of the estate of Lunghezza. They declare that the bond I gave them was lost at the sack of Rome; but that they have a copy of it; and that the reason they have never made the claim in all this time, has been that they could not resist the authority of the late pope. Then Luigi Gaddi pretends that I received his taxes for many years on account of the apostolic chamber, and that I must now make the sum good; which would entail a loss of about five thousand ducats. And other litigations an causes arise, and are brought against me in such number, that if I had only dreamed of the half of them, I would have remained in France, and have preferred to hear of all these losses and sorrows from a distance rather than to see them before my eyes. But the affair of the corn contract afflicts me more than anything else, seeing that it touches not a part, but the entirety of my substance. For I think that the accusations against Verres himself did not involve a larger sum. And as I remember to have read in Seneca, that "it is better to fall once for all, than to be always on the point of falling;"[1] by heaven! it is true that I would rather bring my affairs to a termination at once, even though it be to a disadvantageous one, than to endure longer my present state of suspense. You must, therefore, hold me altogether excused for not having answered your two last letters of the 20th and the 23rd. For in truth there lives not another man this day, so melancholy, bedevilled, and addle-headed, as I am. And my sons, who, it might be thought would be an alleviation of trouble, increase, on the contrary, the weight of it. I have decided, therefore, to send the Prior to Malta; and I am thinking of sending Piero to Padua; as I think these are places where their residence is not

[1] *Præstat semel ruere, quam semper pendere.* Filippo quotes these words of the original.

calculated to cause suspicion. Both this and the other matter will, I hope, be finished by the end of next month. By the other matter I mean the litigation with the city; for my sons too are naturally anxious to see the upshot of the business, inasmuch as their entire fortune is at stake. By their departure I shall be enabled altogether to shut up the house in the Borgo, where they and their retinues [1] are at present living; so that by these means I shall avoid the risk of anything happening, by reason of which they might justly be accused; for I have no means of knowing who comes and goes there, constrained as I am to be continually at the bank working with my clerks from morning till night, and devoting the entire day to the business arising from this litigation. And this is all I have to say on the subject of my sons; except that I may add that I spoke to Antonio Berardi the other day, and told him much at length that it is in nowise honourable in him, under the present circumstance, to frequent or hold communication with my sons; for though it is true that he has not been declared a rebel, yet he is in such a position as to be equally injurious to me. I think that what I said to him, together with the conversation I had afterwards with my sons on the subject, will put an end to this mischief entirely. I am not aware that we have here any other exiles of note, unless, indeed, it be Aldobrandino, who is living with the Cardinal of Ravenna. It is true certainly that there are with Piero in my house in the Borgo, Francesco de' Pazzi, Maso Strozzi, the Salterello, the Cavalier Covoni, Bernardo and Betto Rinuccini, Ciluca, Masino dal Borgo, Berlinghieri, and other such-like friends of mine and theirs, who are pretty constantly there, but whose presence has no significancy. And you may imagine that besides other considerations,

[1] '*Satelliti.*'

the expense is a serious consideration to me, at the present moment especially, when I myself know nothing of what I may be worth in the world. But all this will be shortly put to rights.

'You ask for information respecting anybody here who speaks against or to the discredit of the duke. I have no time now, and there would be much to be said on this subject. But these are matters which it is better to speak than to write of; and besides, it is a topic that may wait.

'I, my friend, am in such a position that for some weeks to come, until, that is, I have terminated my affairs with the pope and with the city, I have need of everybody. And to help myself I accommodate myself to the tastes and opinions of all such as can assist or injure me; and my present necessity must be my excuse for many things, as for my taking, chameleon-like, the colour of whatever is nearest to me. For this reason, if anything should reach the ears of his excellency about me, which is not satisfactory to him, let him suspend his judgment till my fortunes are settled, either for good or ill. I cannot at present enlarge further on this subject; but I trust to your discretion to supply the deficiencies in what I have written.

'I am doing all I can to get in the securities from Sicily, to wind up the accounts of the "*Abbondanza*," for it seems to me a thousand years that they have remained unsettled. Be sure that I consider myself as much obliged to you for your assistance in that business as you can wish. Do not, therefore, take any further trouble in justifying yourself to me, for it displeases me, and seems as if you doubted my good faith.

'I hear that the private ministers of the pope have consulted together, and have determined to call to a strict ac-

count four of those who had the outlying governments under the late pope. They are Guicciardini,[1] Valori, Bernardino della Barba, and Agostino del Nero: they will first begin with the examination of the accounts of those who have had the handling of money here in Rome. And at the head of the list I see Francesco del Nero, who for the present remains deprived of his office, but otherwise unmolested. He too is anxious to see the upshot of my affairs, being partially interested in some of them.

'These are the matters of which you might expect news from me; and for the present nothing else occurs to me, save to commend myself to you cordially, and to wish you a long and happy life.

'Your friend,

'PH. STROZZI.'

On the 2nd of January 1535, he writes again to the same correspondent. In reading the latter part of the letter, which has reference to Alessandro, it should be remembered that the murder of Filippo's daughter Luisa occurred on the 4th of December, 1534, in the interval between the above letter and the following.

'HONOURED FRIEND,—Since my letter of 12th of last month,[2] I have received by Bonajuto yours of the 24th, and have learned from it with great pleasure that the affairs of the "*Abbondanza*" are in a good position; especially in the placing to the credit side of the account what we have to receive in Naples and Sicily. For we shall thus get out of it without loss; and in order that this may the more easily be brought to bear, I have written a good word to Angelo Rocca, who I doubt not

[1] The historian. He held the government of Bologna.

[2] The letter alluded to does not appear to have been preserved.

will give as good an account of himself in this matter as he ever has in so many others. And do not be surprised at remaining so long without hearing from him, for there have come no letters from Palermo for anybody for some time past. God knows how anxiously I am waiting for them; for I expect with them certain receipts and proofs of great importance to my lawsuit about the corn contract; respecting which I can only tell you that the arbitration, by consent of both parties, has been put off for the whole month of January. I have offered the city ten thousand ducats for the sake of getting clear of so disagreeable a business; but it has not been accepted; as they think that sum exceedingly small in proportion to that[1] which they pretend they ought to extort from me. I must live in this anxiety yet another month; and then I shall leave in their hands so much of my skin, that I shall never forget henceforward what sort of thing it is to have to deal with the populace. I never piqued myself on being a good hand at dealing with them; and I ought to have kept clear of them from the first: for the future I shall do so; and I shall have learned the lesson not at the expense of others, as prudent men do, but at my own.

'His holiness has during the last few days made urgent applications to me to give up the pledges which I received from Clement at Marseilles, as security for the eighty thousand ducats I paid for him. His holiness promises me on his word that he will not take from me the assignment of twenty thousand crowns, which I hold on the dues from Spain; nor put any obstacle in the way of my levying the tenth on ecclesiastical property which was assigned me by Clement, and which may bring in some ten thousand ducats. He secures me another

[1] It will be remembered that the sum claimed by the city was seven hundred thousand ducats.

twenty thousand on other dues, which he makes over to me as a sale,[1] reserving to himself the right of repurchase at the same price at any future time. But what is worst, he insists on drawing the proceeds of them for the first year himself. His holiness thus makes provision for fifty thousand ducats out of the eighty which remain due to me; while I, to avoid disputes with the higher powers, have agreed to give up everything to his holiness,—offices to the value of about twenty thousand ducats, and credits on the "*Monte di Fede*"[2] to the amount of about twenty-five thousand, which I held as securities for the eighty thousand ducats. The assignments on chattel property, which are liable to a thousand casualties, thus remain to me, while I divest myself of solid and good securities. I pray that God may grant life to his holiness; for in truth I have no fear that if he lives he will not keep his word: with all this I am so worn out, that I am resolving to live the life that remains to me in tranquil poverty, rather than in the possession of wealth joined to such incessant persecutions.

'The new ministers of Pope Paul think that I have immense wealth, and that all of it has been drawn from ecclesiastical property; and under this idea they demand of me thousands of accounts, new and old,—a proceeding most troublesome, and excessively annoying.[3]

'I can assure you, my friend, that misfortune is taking her swing, and emptying all her sack on my head. I admit that as I have had a tranquil and prosperous time,

[1] The arrangement seems to have been that for the twenty thousand ducats certain dues were made over to Filippo, the pope to recover possession of them when the twenty thousand had, by means of them, been liquidated.

[2] The word '*monte*' answers very nearly to our phrase 'a fund.' The *Monte* di Fede,' therefore, was some government fund so named.

[3] 'Cose moleste, di gran fastidio.'

it is fair that the rest of my life should be all trouble; and I prepare myself for it as best I may, by recurring frequently to the perusal of those authors who teach us how to bear ill-fortune with constancy.[1]

'Respecting the Florentine affairs of my son Piero' (the quarrel with Salviati), 'the duke, in answer to a letter of mine, expresses himself favourably though shortly. He promises me to arrange the matter in any shape that shall be most agreeable to me, and refers me to his eminence Cardinal Cibo, and the Archbishop of Capua.'[2]

It is strange to think that while Strozzi was thus in correspondence with the duke, and thus speaking of him, he knew that his daughter had either been murdered by him within the month, or if not so, had been murdered by her own family to save her from his outrages. It is not that the father felt a small measure of resentment, or meditated a small measure of vengeance, as we shall see; but he knew that the duke was aware, and that his correspondent was aware, that he (Strozzi) must have knowledge of the facts; and yet he thinks it possible to persuade both of them, or at all events the duke, that he was quite ready to treat with him in the most amicable spirit.

The letter proceeds:—

'The duke begs me to come to Florence as soon as ever my present occupations will permit me to do so, saying that he wishes to have a long interview with me; a thing that I myself wish for more than anybody else, although I may have given more than one person here to understand the contrary. But I see no possibility of my accomplishing my return, so much to be wished for, so as

[1] It is perhaps hardly necessary to observe, that Filippo alludes, not to sacred writ, but to the works of the stoic philosophers.

[2] This archbishop was Nicholas Schomberg, a German friar. Both these churchmen were Alessandro's most trusted counsellers.

to be with you before March or April; for I must settle every outstanding account with the pope before I leave Rome.

'Francesco del Nero, although he has been menaced with persecution, has not up to the present moment had any further trouble. God grant that his misfortunes may have reached their term! because he would so be the more able to assist me in mine.

'I expect my colleagues here shortly' (the other four ambassadors, who were to join him in the Florentine embassy to congratulate Paul III. on his accession), 'and I am preparing all that is necessary for doing due honour to him who has honoured me by the appointment' (the Duke Alessandro, that is to say); 'but I can assure you that the whole business is a great impediment to my affairs, so much so, that if I had thought that I could have done it without losing credit in Florence, I should long since have begged that some one else might be appointed in my stead. However, as the matter stands there is nothing for it but to go through with it; and I will do so.

'Your letters have all reached me in due course. I have nothing further that occurs to me at present; and my sheet is full. I conclude, therefore, by commending myself to you, and may God have you in his keeping.

'Your friend,

'PH. STROZZI.

'After I had written the above, your letter of the 23rd arrived; but it does not seem to me to require any further reply, as there is an answer to both your last. Francesco del Nero and I both commend ourselves to you.'

There can be little doubt that when Strozzi was writing to Florence of his hopes to be able to go thither

in March or April, he had already made up his mind to return there no more, unless, indeed, Alessandro should have first been ruined and deposed. It will be seen presently to what extent that 'chameleon-like taking the colour of whatever was nearest him,' which Filippo wished to attribute wholly to the necessities of his embarrassed position in Rome, had extended. But while actively engaged in the intrigues to be described in the following chapter, it seems to have been his policy to induce Alessandro to believe, up to the last moment possible, that he was only anxious to be reconciled to him. Alessandro on his part appears to have been playing a precisely similar game. While meditating all sorts of schemes for Strozzi's destruction, he was, as has been seen, offering his influence to make up the quarrel with Salviati, and appointing his enemy, one of his ambassadors to Rome. Very soon the designs of either party became too manifest to admit of any further attempts at mutual deception. And in all probability neither the duke nor the banker was at any time deceived as to the real sentiments of the other.

The next letter, which is the last of the series illustrating this part of the story, indicates, that when the April which he professed to look forward to had come and gone, he thought it time to begin to throw off the mask in some degree; though still representing that the unfortunate position of his affairs, which had driven him to fall in with the schemes of men he would have preferred to avoid, had been the sole cause of his now finding himself in a position which made his coming to Florence for the present out of the question.

This letter, also written to Francesco Vettori, and dated Rome, 29th of April, 1535, runs as follows:—

"My Friend,—My past prosperities have all flown

away, according to the rule which governs human affairs, the nature of which is to be liable to such variations. Nor do I think that I am likely henceforward to see or to hear anything that can give me pleasure. Since the absolute government of your city is in the hands of my mortal enemies,—enemies of whom I have in my hands the clear proof, that even during the lifetime of Clement, while I was neglecting nothing which could give evidence of my zealous adhesion and desire to serve them, they were plotting my destruction in the basest manner, and by the vilest falsehood; and who so nearly succeeded in their scheme that it strikes me with horror to think of it[1] —I do not think it would be possible for me to live there in security.

'With the people I can never more throw in my lot; nor can I, nor ought I evermore to trust them; and this for having too well served their cause, rather than my own interest. Under another sovereign, on the other hand, I do not see that my life and property would be safer than they are at present. For these reasons I, who never sought anything but my own tranquillity and security, and could be content under any form of government which assured me these, as I cannot see that there is any throw of the dice that can come up in my favour, can only consider it a matter of perpetual grief that my own deficiency in prudence, or immoderate ill-fortune, has brought me into such a position that I find myself obliged to renounce my own native country, and choose for myself another.'

The mixture of truth and falsehood in this statement is

[1] The allusion here is to Alessandro's attempt to fix on Strozzi a charge of conspiring to poison him, as the reader will remember. But it should have been answered to him, that he knew all this before, and not now for the first time.

worthy of the artist in deceit who strove to dupe that great master, Clement VII., by a cunning compound of the same kind.

That the despotic ruler of Florence was Strozzi's mortal enemy was true. Quite true also that that same despotic ruler, Alessandro, whom he affects not to name, *did* compass his destruction by base fraud; and true, moreover, that, at the period of that attempt, Strozzi was, as he says, giving proofs of the most zealous affection for the young sovereign, even to the extent of devoting his gray-haired experience in the arts of seduction, nunnery-violation, and abduction of citizens' daughters to his service; to the extent, moreover, of framing the proscription lists of his enemies, and building him a fortress to keep those who did not like such methods of government in due subjection. That all these services had not elicited so much gratitude from the princely object of them, as to make it safe for Strozzi to trust his life in his power, is still further unquestionably true.

It was, moreover, probable enough that Strozzi might not have found himself much better off in Florence, had a restoration of the old popular government taken place. But the effrontery, which enables him to talk of his services to the popular cause in the same breath with his boast of devoted affection to Alessandro, is astounding. He could 'never again trust the people!' It would have been strange if he could have trusted them for anything save the extermination of his house. It was wholly false that he had at any time, even in 1527, 'well served their cause,' as the reader of the preceding chapters must be well aware. He could have been content, he says, to live under any form of government which secured him personal security and tranquillity. By this latter phrase, understand—the best opportunity and chances for his

money-making operations—and the statement probably is not far from the truth. It amounts simply to asserting that he had not political principles or care for his country's weal at all, and asked nothing but the quietness desirable for successful banking and loan operations. But it so happened that he judged, and no doubt rightly judged, that Medicean ascendency was the most propitious for these. A despot's loan-contractor can hardly be a friend to popular government. Who does not wish for the prosperity and solvability of his debtor?

Then as to third alternative, of 'any other sovereign,' the lie is the most glaring of all. Why, he was at that very time deep in schemes for transferring the principality of Florence to 'another sovereign,' under whom he hoped, by double treachery both to Alessandro and the liberal party, to recover all the position he had lost, and by a fresh course of 'devotedness' and subserviency obtain from a fresh tyrant all that his past 'zeal' had failed to obtain from the undying hatred and malignity of Alessandro!

'Would to God!' cries the old hypocrite, continuing his letter, 'that I had never been involved in all these extraordinary troubles. For then I would at once have betaken myself to Venice, without having ever consented to have anything to do with state intrigues, or even to have heard a word upon the subject. And there striving to make myself agreeable to all, without offending any one, I would have hoped in process of time to have recovered the favour of the duke, or at least to have escaped his hatred. And perhaps by this means too I might have been more likely to have obtained pardon from the people, if it should ever come to pass that they should again get the upper hand.'

It would seem that he was aware that some of

the truth respecting his schemes for the deposition of Alexander had reached Florence, and the ears of the duke. But he was even still anxious to make it appear that anything of the sort into which he had been led was to be attributed solely to the unfortunate necessities of his position in Rome, which had driven him to make himself all things to all men. It is difficult to understand what motive other than a fox-like instinct of duplicity and concealment, can have made it appear to him worth while to attempt to keep on a mask to which all his easily known actions were giving the lie.

'But,' he continues, 'my unhappy fate necessitated my remaining here in Rome, and forced me to have need of the favours and assistance of persons, my connection with whom has made it impossible for me to follow that path of neutrality which I had proposed to myself.

'Not to trouble you further, however, with many thanks for your prudent and friendly counsels, I, in return, advise you not to take any further steps for defending me or justifying me to any one. Let matters go as best they may in their natural course. For, whatever my loss may be, it will seem less to me if unaccompanied by any damage to you, whose prosperity has ever been a less pressing care than my own safety.

'Your friend,

'PH. STROZZI.'

Filippo's brother expresses high admiration of his unbroken constancy and moral courage during this time of distress and adversity in Rome. 'He never gave way,' he says, 'to depression, either in mind or body, but nobly worked hard night and day.' Of one of the two weighty affairs which were so hardly pressing the great capitalist, he got out of the first, Clement's debt for the

dower, with the loss of only four thousand crowns of interest, as has been said, thanks to the somewhat questionable liberality of Paul III. The other, and still more important matter of the corn contract, was at last brought to a conclusion by the two cardinals appointed as arbiters awarding to the city one hundred and seventy five thousand out of their claim of seven hundred thousand ducats. And this award, says Lorenzo Strozzi, was made 'for no other reason than to pacify the people; which Filippo himself also was anxious to do, that he might not, at the same time that he was losing Florence, lose Rome also, which he had chosen as a second country.'

CHAPTER XIII.

Rivalry between Alessandro and Ippolito de' Medici. — Intrigues of Filippo against Alessandro.—The 'Fuorusciti.'—Their bond of union and social position.—Why the old Italian attempts at self-government failed. — Imperial authority in Italy. — Motives influencing Charles V.—Negotiations between Filippo, Ippolito, and the 'Fuorusciti.'—Mission of Florentines to Charles at Barcelona.—Alessandro's attempt to assassinate Piero Strozzi.—Ippolito's journey to Itri on his way to seek an interview with Charles V.—Death of Ippolito at Itri.—The cause of it.—Suspicions attaching to Alessandro.—To Paul III.—Characteristics of the period.

THE Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici, the only other male surviving descendant of the elder branch of the family, besides Alessandro, but like him illegitimate, was the son of Giuliano, generally called the Duke de Nemours, who was the third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Thus, if family honours or inheritance could in any wise be claimed by illegitimate descendants of a family, and if descent from the old merchant Cosimo, who got himself, on no very reasonable grounds, called the 'Father of his country,' could in any wise have entitled his posterity to make themselves the tyrants of their country, it is then clear that Ippolito had a better claim to that preferment than Alessandro; unless, indeed, it could have been shown that the latter really was the son of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, and not, as was supposed, of Pope Clement. Ippolito, we are told, was at all events very strongly of this opinion. But Clement, from the boyhood of the two lads, destined

Alessandro to the tyrant-ship, and Ippolito, very much against his will, to the cardinalate.

Each was about as unfit for the position marked out for him as possible. Alessandro, as far as can be perceived, must have been equally an abomination in any walk of life. But Ippolito seems to have had more fitness for the ducal coronet than for the red hat, and might possibly have made a tolerable sovereign as sovereigns then went. He had at all events some lovable and estimable qualities, and most of the historians have a good word for him. It is true that he once murdered a man in the streets of Rome, to the great disgust of the eminently respectable Clement, who could not understand a cardinal thus removing an enemy by open and scandalous violence. True, also, that he suborned an archbishop[1] to murder his kinsman Alessandro at Florence. But these were deemed very venial faults; the latter especially quite a natural, and almost justifiable deed under the circumstances; and they do not seem at all to have injured his character in the eyes of his contemporaries as a promising and amiable prince.

One of the most frequently recurring phrases of eulogy bestowed on Ippolito by the contemporary writers, is his notable 'royal-mindedness.' And he certainly evidenced it by a very intense desire for the sovereignty of his native city. He was ready for anything that seemed to promise a means of getting rid of his hated rival Alessandro, and putting himself into his place. And it was to him, and his 'royal-minded' passions therefore, that Filippo turned as the instrument best adapted for his purpose, when after Clement's death, he determined to leave no stone unturned to revenge himself on Alessandro. It would seem certain,

[1] The story of this attempt may be found in 'The Girlhood of Catherine de' Medici,' by the present writer, p. 213.

despite the crafty letters given in the preceding chapter, that Filippo began his machinations for this object very soon if not immediately after his arrival in Rome, in September, 1534. For the appointment of the ambassadors to congratulate the new pope must have taken place immediately after his election. And in speaking of the nomination of Filippo, his brother says that Alessandro was induced to pay him that compliment, because something of Strozzi's intrigues had reached his ears. For as 'he began to perceive, what of himself he had not probably before discovered, that to keep Filippo and his sons out of Florence was more injurious to himself than to them, inasmuch as in the city they might be injured by him, while he could hardly be hurt by them, whereas if they were elsewhere the case was just the reverse,' he was for this reason anxious to bring about a seeming reconciliation with them.

Again, when speaking of the terms of arrangement made with Paul III. in the matter of the debt for Catherine's dower, Lorenzo writes, 'Filippo *had already* opened his mind to Ippolito as to his discontent with Alessandro.' And we know from the third of the letters in the last chapter, that this matter had been arranged on the 2nd of January, 1535. We may conclude, therefore, that these intrigues were going on during the whole of the period over which the letters referred to extend.

But the game which Filippo had to play was a complicated and delicate one. For it was exceedingly desirable for the success of any scheme tending to put Ippolito in Alessandro's place, that the numerous and distinguished exiles from Florence should be brought to co-operate in it. But their quarrel was not with Alessandro, but with the Medici in general—not only with the existing tyrant, but with tyranny. Their object was to

restore the old popular government as it had existed before the return of the Medici in 1512. For during the short interval of freedom from their sway, from 1527 to the fall of Florence in August, 1530, things had been in too troublous and disorganized a condition for that period to be referred to as exemplifying the state to which they desired to be restored. Their 'cry' was, the constitution as previous to 1512. And this was what the solemn covenant made by Clement and the imperial general with the city at the time of its capitulation had assured to them. It was by no means easy, therefore, to induce them to make common cause with Ippolito in any revolutionary schemes. And to add to the difficulty, Strozzi, as may be easily imagined, was in especially bad odour with them. He was, as he well might be, one of the last men whom they could trust in the circumstances of the case. That he was sincere in his enmity to Alessandro, it was easy to believe; but the charge continually brought against him by the exiles for liberty's sake, was, that he hated 'the man, and not the thing'—Alessandro, and not despotism.

The task of bringing about a junction of interests between the exiles and Ippolito, was made all the more difficult too by the remarkable organization which caused them to act in all political matters as a compact and united party. This singular organization into a constituted body, which existed among the Florentine exiles, is one of the most curious features of the social and political habits of that period. The '*fuorusciti*,'[1] literally, 'those who had gone out' (of the city, that is to say), occupy a large and important place in the political history of Florence during many generations. The pages of the numerous Florentine historians are full of them; and the influence exercised by them on not only the political but

[1] Or 'fuori usciti,' in two words, as it may often be found written.

the social habits and history of the country, may be likened rather to that of our 'opposition,' than to what our notions would lead us to attribute to a body of exiles. Indeed, they occupied nearly the same social standing as 'Her Majesty's opposition' holds with us. Those who with us are discontented with the existing order of things are 'out'—of office. In old Florence, the greater violence of political hatreds and fears, and the less civilized means of which political warfare availed itself, drove the 'outs' not out of the office only, but out of the country.

Our own history offers one example—that of the period when a pretender to the throne was holding a court at St. Germains—of a somewhat similar position of a body of exiles in relation to the country from which they were 'fuorusciti.' But, fortunately perhaps for English destinies, the 'outs' who congregated at St. Germains were by no means held together and directed by so complete an organization and bond of union as that possessed by the Florentine exiles, who yet had no such centre of union as that afforded by a pretender's court. It would seem an exceedingly difficult thing to maintain any such union among a large number of citizens of various ranks and fortunes, sent adrift on the world, to seek asylums and the means of living where each could best find them. Yet among the Florentine 'fuorusciti,' this union was not merely a practically existent bond, but a formally constituted one; as is shown by the mention we find of 'procuratori de' fuorusciti,'[1]—attorneys of, or managers for the exiles, who had authority to name deputies and send embassies on their behalf.

It is one other, and a very remarkable instance of the great facility and adaptation for social and political organization possessed by the Italian race. It is a yet unfor-

[1] Vita di Filippo Strozzi. Ed. cit. p. lxxxi.

feited legacy of the old municipal form of society, which, in the strong desire imparted by it to every citizen to have a voice in the creation of the authority which was to rule him, and in the habit of willing obedience to authority so constituted which it generated, possessed two of the most important elements in the character of a people fitted for the master achievement of self-government. *Two!* but a third was wanting, the absence of which rendered these two unavailing, and subjected the people who were deficient in it to inevitable despotism. It was that late growth of an advanced civilization, a sufficient reverence for opinion to insure such respect for minorities, as would have moderated those internecine quarrels and indomitable party hatreds, which not only always enabled some dexterous tyrant to practise the old '*divide et impera!*' receipt, but killed the germ of free sentiment in the hearts of the citizens. It was the old truly barbarous 'Væ victis!' principle, which, by making every majority tyrannous, corrupted it into becoming first the accomplice and then the victim of despotism, that has for three hundred years neutralized all the high social qualities with which the Italian races are endowed, and that now for the first time, as there is every ground to hope and believe, is yielding to the effect of a nineteenth-century social atmosphere.

Neither Ippolito, nor Filippo Strozzi, nor the Florentine exiles seem at this time to have had any hope or notion of changing the government in Florence otherwise than by persuading 'Cæsar' to do so by his will and superior authority. Ippolito, indeed, as we have seen, made a little attempt on his own behalf, by sending the Archbishop of Marseilles to assassinate his cousin. But that having miscarried, he too thought only of pleading his cause before the tribunal of 'Cæsar.' The strangely

persistent and undying influence of a name and an habitual idea is very curiously instanced in the deference which all Italy felt and showed for the German emperor. Strange that in all their quarrels among themselves it should not have occurred to the Italians, and it seems never to have done so, to ask themselves why, and by what title this Flemish man, Charles, should exercise authority in Italy! A curious enough pedigree of Cæsarship, from the laurel-crowned buskined Roman, who first bequeathed to his successors the world-subduing name, down to the saturnine, underhung, mail-clad scion of some barbaric Rhetian stock!—a pedigree made out by an imagined virtue in certain places, words, ceremonies, and symbols, yet strong enough in power over the imagination of mankind to compel the reverence, obedience, and submission of the best part of the world!

Now the case between Florence and 'Cæsar' stood thus —Underhung, saturnine, Flemish Charles, as Cæsar, and false, perfidious, wily Clement, as vicegerent on the part of heaven, agreed, notwithstanding the so-recent internecine disagreement between themselves, to destroy by 'the secular arm' the liberties of 'the most democratic of democracies,' which were so odious in the eyes of both of them, on the understanding that the principality, by right divine, of course, to be thus constituted, should become a sovereignty for the natural son of the 'vicar of Christ,' and at the same time a dower for the natural daughter of Cæsar. Now the young bridegroom had been put into possession of his sovereignty, but he had not yet received the hand of his bride. Clement was dead and gone. And it was hoped that as Cæsar could displace Alessandro, not only as easily (for it had not been, although it was Cæsar and pope against one small city, a very easy job), but very much more easily than he had placed him where he was, and

as his interest was not yet irrevocably bound up with that of Alessandro by the marriage of his daughter,—it was hoped that it might be possible that Cæsar, all emperor as he was, might be brought to consider that Alessandro was not a desirable son-in-law, if it could be made clear to him what manner of man he really was. In fact, the honest burghers, in their uncourtly simplicity, absolutely fancied that the same sort of moral considerations as sway ordinary human beings might be brought to bear on the imperial mind of Cæsar! They imagined that there was an analogy between the workings of an imperial conscience and those of their own!

Filippo Strozzi was too courtly and well-bred a man to have entertained any such *bourgeoises* ideas. *He* never could have believed that the emperor would be moved by such moral considerations from carrying out his plan for making his own influence definitely and securely supreme in Florence, and excluding for ever that of his rival, France. *He*, doubtless, had read the Greek poet's exception to the rule, that iniquity should not be done; and knew that for the sake of empire it might, or at all events would be perpetrated. *His* hopes, therefore, in accusing Alessandro before Cæsar, lay, as his brother fully explains,[1] in so convicting him openly as a murderer and poisoner, as that Charles should feel, not any personal dislike for such a man as a son-in-law, but merely that it would be against his interest to proclaim himself in the face of Europe so wholly indifferent to all considerations of morality. The world is not all made up of kings, popes, and emperors. The esoteric code of cabinets cannot be alone consulted. And even in the sixteenth century Cæsar had to pay some attention to the exoteric feelings of the vulgar upon such subjects.

[1] Vita. Ed. cit. p. lxxxi.

With a view, therefore, to the proposed arraignment of Alessandro before the high tribunal of the emperor—a tribunal which the Italian patriots would not have recognized even for the sake of effecting the object they proposed to themselves, had they been wise—it was necessary for Strozzi to persuade the 'fuorusciti' first to trust in and co-operate with Ippolito, and secondly to trust himself as a medium of communication between them and the latter. And both these enterprises were difficult. It was necessary, also, to persuade Ippolito to consent to co-operate with the exiles. But this was far more easily accomplished. The only danger to be guarded against with regard to him was, that if he were led to judge that his hope of supplanting Alessandro was small, he might come to the decision that the best thing he could do would be to reconcile himself with the son-in-law of the emperor.

In fact, Ippolito had sent on his own account a person in whom he confided to the emperor in Spain, to sound him on the subject, and ascertain what amount of hope there might be of diverting the imperial bounties from his kinsman to himself. And it so happened that just when Strozzi was eagerly urging him to work with him and the body of the exiles for the overthrow of Alessandro, this messenger returned with tidings that Ippolito had nothing to expect from the emperor, who plainly had no confidence in him. This report of the views of the shrewd Charles tempts one to ask what was the nature of the 'confidence' which he *had* in Alessandro and had not in Ippolito? It was wholly impossible that the emperor could have deemed him a worse man, or thought it likely that he would have made a worse ruler. Was it that 'the Cæsar' saw in those better and more generous qualities which universal report attributed to the cardinal, a possibility that they might lead him to desire the real welfare and happiness

of his country to a degree not compatible with the views of the imperial despot? Sovereigns renegade in such sort are most dangerous phenomena, more deprecated and abhorred by their fellow crowned heads than any vulgar rebel. Nothing of this sort was to be feared from son-in-law Alessandro! No danger that *he* and his subjects should make common cause, so as to exclude imperial interference, and render unnecessary imperial protection!

Ippolito called Strozzi to counsel on receiving the above intelligence. Would it be best for him, under these circumstances, to make it up with Alessandro, as the emperor wished, and to accept the ecclesiastical preferments which were offered him should he consent to do so? Strozzi pointed out to him that such a reconciliation would be 'very profitable to the duke, inasmuch as it would secure to him the proposed connection with Cæsar, and with that the sovereignty of Florence, and many other advantages; but that it would be both injurious and disgraceful to himself' (Ippolito).[1] He went on to argue that it would assuredly be unprofitable, because 'such matters had passed between them' (alluding to Ippolito's attempt to have the duke assassinated) as would make Alessandro feel that he never could be sure of him; and this feeling on Alessandro's part would make it impossible for him (the cardinal) ever to live in safety in Florence as long as his kinsman was in power there. And as for the appanage which Alessandro promised him if he would become reconciled to him, that, said Strozzi, would last only till the marriage with the emperor's daughter was secured, as the duke would then snap his fingers at him, quite certain that Charles would take the part of his son-in-law. Then as to the preferments promised by the emperor, they too, 'like the promises of princes in general,' would last only

[1] Vita di Filippo Strozzi. Ed. cit. p. lxxx. See note 14.

as long as suited the convenience of his majesty, and the duke himself would be sure to interfere to take them from him, if only to weaken one whom he would always consider as his enemy. For all these reasons, said Strozzi, it was clear that Ippolito could find no advantage in reconciliation with Alessandro.

Further he argued, that such reconciliation would be disgraceful to the cardinal, inasmuch as all the world would know that mere hope of profit and no noble motive was the inducement which led him to consent to it.

It is curious to observe in the above argument (reported as it is by the strict pietist brother and biographer of the man, who used it, without the shadow or appearance of disapprobation) how unblushingly, and as a matter of course, the motives which really influence human conduct, are assumed to be altogether different from those by which a man would have his fellow-men suppose he was influenced. In examining the considerations which might move Ippolito to fall in with the proposals made him, Strozzi never dreams of taking into account any save those of profit; and he decides against being moved by them, *only* on the ground that the profit would not be realized. Yet in the very same breath he considers it equally a matter of course that the world would deem it disgraceful to act in obedience to these motives, and that it is desirable not to let it be known that such had any influence on the decision to be arrived at. Men are apt, indeed, to act on lower motives than they avow, even to themselves. But to find this elderly banker-statesman and this young cardinal princeling conversing on the perfectly understood hypothesis, that their actions would be regulated by considerations avowedly meaner than such as could be with advantage exposed to the outer world, argues a curiously low condition of moral sentiment. It argues even a cynical

denial of moral sentiment. It implies the mutual consciousness of an esoteric doctrine which contemned and rejected those notions of generosity, nobleness, and virtue, which the outside world believed in, and which it was consequently prudent to affect in its sight.

The 'practical man' went on to show his youthful pupil in statecraft, that by embracing the opposite line of action, and uniting himself with the exiles, 'he would gain immortal honour and glory as the deliverer and true father of his country, and *would see his arms put up everywhere all over the city;*' while, said the practical man, topping up his case with an amusingly characteristic argument, this would also be your wisest course of action if you should feel inclined to make yourself despotic master of the country instead of liberating it, inasmuch as the best chance of succeeding in such an attempt would be by means of acquiring popularity in the first instance. But this, says brother Lorenzo, 'was only put forward by Strozzi, who knew the cardinal's ambition, as a means of gaining his co-operation at any cost.

He assured Ippolito further, that all the old friends of the Medici were so disgusted and alienated by the conduct of Alessandro, that they would gladly transfer their allegiance to him. He said that he would undertake, if Ippolito were only *prudent*, to bring the 'fuorusciti' over to his party; and finally whispered, that with the assistance of French money and favour, which his (Strozzi's) influence was sufficient, he averred, to assure to him, any attempt he might make would be secure of success.

Filippo had a more difficult task, as has been observed, to persuade the Florentine exiles to make common cause with the Cardinal Ippolito. That they should have been slow to trust a Medici as a fellow-labourer in the cause of freedom, and even slower still to believe that Filippo

Strozzi had at any time or under any circumstances aught but his own interests in view, will not be thought surprising. When he talked with them on the subject, they would 'bite at him as an enemy, not to despotism, but to Duke Alessandro; and sometimes drove him to such desperation, that he all but made up his mind to retire to Venice, and there live in peace and security.'[1]

Still, however, this skilful negotiator did not give up; but returned again and again to the charge, prompting the 'fuorusciti' to use towards Ippolito the counterpart of the same lie that he had urged Ippolito to put forward to deceive them. They ought, he said, to represent to the cardinal that it was true that they wished for a popular form of government, but that as such a thing was out of the question, and it was clear they must have a prince, they would have none other but him. This, Strozzi set forth to them, was their true policy, as it was only by holding out such a hope to Ippolito that he could be prevented from becoming reconciled with Alessandro; and it was certain, that their only hope lay in the existence of discord among the Medici, as the union of that family was their destruction. He assured them that there was no reason for them to fear that in co-operating with the cardinal they might be only labouring to set up another sovereign in Alessandro's place; for that he had private means of knowing for a certainty that the emperor had a bad opinion of Ippolito, and would never consent to his becoming master of Florence.

Lorenzo Strozzi admits that his brother was never able to overcome the distrust of himself which was general among the Florentine patriots. They could not get over the suspicion that he was making use of them for his own purposes in some way. Yet, says he, as they had no

[1] Vita di Filippo Strozzi. Ed. cit. p. lxxv.

other hope or prospects, they were fain to yield to his reasoning; and thenceforth began to gather around the cardinal, frequent his house, and offer him, 'having nothing else to offer,' remarks Lorenzo, 'their lives and persons.'

While these plots for the overthrow of Alessandro were being matured at Rome, chiefly by the skill and activity of Strozzi, during the spring and summer of 1535, the duke was furnishing fresh materials for the indictment to be preferred against him before 'Cæsar.' He sent a gang of bravoes to Rome to assassinate Strozzi there, as he began to see that there was no hope of enticing him into coming to be killed at Florence. But these sinister-looking strangers imprudently made so many open and especial inquiries about the residence of Filippo, that suspicion was aroused. They were arrested, and the plot discovered. But Lorenzo complains, that in consequence of many of Clement's creatures not having been as yet removed from the magistracy, the officers, venal at all times, as he says, suffered them to escape; and that too 'without having used any diligence in torturing them.' The result, however, was such as to make the breach between Alessandro and Strozzi public to all the world, and at the same time to proclaim equally loudly the nature of the weapons Alessandro used against his enemies. For thenceforth Strozzi and his followers went armed through the streets of Rome, by the special permission of Paul III. —a privilege at that time very rarely granted.

The union between Ippolito and the exiles was at length so far brought to bear, that two deputations to the emperor, one from the adherents of the cardinal, and one from the 'fuorusciti,' were agreed upon. They were to travel together on friendly terms; and though the petitions carried by them differed, they in point of fact tended to the same end. The friends of Ippolito begged that he

might be preferred to the government of Florence; but added, that they made no opposition, should that be refused, to the re-establishment of the republic; so that only the intolerable Alessandro might be removed. The deputation from the exiles begged the emperor to restore popular government in Florence, according to his promises made at the time of the capitulation; adding, however, that should his majesty see good not to keep them, they would in that case be content to live under the government of Ippolito, so that only the intolerable Alessandro might be got rid of.

To both parties 'Cæsar' replied that he was very sorry he had then no time to look into the matters in question, as he was on the point of starting to chastise the Moors, on the coast of Barbary; that he should be in Italy on his return, and would then not fail to do what was right in the matter. This interview took place in Barcelona.

Piero Strozzi, Filippo's eldest son, had been one of the deputies sent to Charles, and he was returning together with Lorenzo Ridolfi and Antonio Berardi out of Spain to Rome. As they were passing through Provence, a messenger sent from Lyons to meet them, came with a warning that a band of eight or ten cut-throats were awaiting them on their passage through Alessandria, stationed there by the duke to waylay and despatch them. The fact, it should seem, had become known in Florence; and intelligence of it had instantly been forwarded, by means which the great banker's business transactions supplied in abundance, to the agents of his bank in Lyons, who had thus been able to send it on in time to catch Piero on his passage through France. It would have been difficult at that time to scheme anything in any part of the continent of Europe without notice of it reaching Strozzi, if the knowledge were of importance to him.

When Piero and his travelling companions heard of the snare prepared for them, they changed their route, and came by the river Po to Piacenza. There they learned, that one Petruccio, a known ruffian in the pay of Alessandro, had just passed through Piacenza with one companion on his way to Bologna. Acting on this intelligence, they hurried forwards, and coming up with him in Modena, caused him to be arrested by the governor of that city, on the evidence of the information that had been sent from Lyons. A few turns of the rack persuaded the wretch to tell his whole story. He confessed that he was employed by Alessandro to do the murder; showed the money he had received for his hire; and stated, that having, according to his orders, waited at Alessandria for the appearance of his victims for several days in vain, he was then on his way back to Florence to ask for further instructions.

All this was committed to writing, and duly evidenced. But at Piero Strozzi's urgent request the men's lives were spared in order that their evidence against their employer might be forthcoming at need.

Here was another choice addition to the long bill of grievances to be presented to Charles on his return from Africa, against his intended son-in-law. Was it possible, the exiles began to ask each other, that the 'Cæsar' would bestow his daughter, even though she were an illegitimate one, on a convicted suborner of assassins? Would his 'honour' permit him to act in such a manner in the face of Europe? They forgot, these republican burghers, that as every man owns allegiance only to the public opinion of his peers, and cares little what may be thought of him by other classes if he is supported by the sympathy of his own, so sovereigns are amenable only to the judgment of their fellow-monarchs. And all history

might have taught them that no measure of atrocity, save the one unpardonable fault of concession to the demands of their subjects, has ever sufficed to call down on a crowned criminal the ban of his brother despots.

Towards the end of the summer it was determined by Strozzi, the cardinal Ippolito, and the united body of the Florentine exiles, now acting for the nonce harmoniously together, that the cardinal himself, accompanied by certain of the 'fuorusciti,' should, without waiting for the emperor's return, seek him at Tunis, and there lay their complaints before him. This step was no sooner decided on than Ippolito made all haste to start on the expedition. To supply himself with the necessary funds, he broke up and sold all the plate he possessed; and in addition borrowed ten thousand ducats[1] from the inexhaustible purse of Filippo Strozzi. Thus furnished, he hired twenty post-horses for his own immediate servants and for the four Florentines who were to accompany him, and so rode forth from Rome in the last days of July.

But the grave and learned historian Segni has recorded, that as the young cardinal was in the act of mounting his mare, and while the groom was holding the stirrup for him, the mare, though a very fine one, fell without any apparent reason; a circumstance which those who were most knowing in such matters, says Segni, considered to be an evil omen.

Having arrived at Itri, a little town within the Neapolitan frontier, not far from Gaeta, the cavalcade remained there for some days, apparently waiting perhaps for the vessel on which they were to embark at Gaeta. There is a hint, however, of another cause which may have occasioned this fatal delay. The beautiful Giulia Gonzaga[2]

[1] Segni. Op. cit., vol. ii. p. 88.
[2] Varchi. Op. cit., vol. iii. p. 126.

was residing at the little town of Fondi, in the immediate neighbourhood of Itri; and the cardinal, we are told, rode over several times from the one town to the other to visit her.

On returning from one of these visits on the 2nd of August he felt ill; and continued so till the 5th. On that day his seneschal, one Giovanni Andrea of Borgo San Sepolcro, brought him a basin of broth as he lay in bed. Immediately after swallowing it, he threw it up again, and was attacked by severe pain. Whereupon he sent for Bernardino Salviati, one of his suite, and told him that he was poisoned, and that Giovanni Andrea was the poisoner. He continued to get worse daily, 'wasting away little by little, and having a continual slight low fever;' and on the 10th of the month he died.

His followers immediately seized the seneschal, and pursuing the usual infallible plan in similar cases, put him to torture, and obtained from him a confession that he had administered poison to the cardinal, having ground it between two stones, which he had thrown away. These were sought for in the place which he indicated; and on two stones found there being brought to him, he said that those were not the stones he had used. Further search was then made; and on two other stones being shown to him, he declared that they were those with which he had ground the poison. Varchi, who like most of the other historians, seems constantly to be aware that a confession produced by torture must be valueless as an evidence of truth, relates these minute facts as tending to show that the man's statement was a true one; as to a certain extent, if accurately related, they do.

The question then arises, who was the employer of this wretched poisoner, if, indeed, Ippolito died of poison? In the first place, the above account, which is that given by

Varchi (for the other historians, Segni and Lorenzo Strozzi, have related the matter much more compendiously, and represent the death to have been much more sudden but without any particularity of dates), will strike any modern reader as much more like that of the death of a man by precisely such a fever as one riding to and fro between Itri and Fondi in August would be likely to catch, than like a death by poison. Poisoning was in that day and country so common, and medical ignorance was so great, that any remarkable or untimely death was invariably attributed to it. And were this the whole case, we should probably pooh-pooh the story at once, and bring in a verdict of natural death, caused by those imprudent rides in an unhealthy district under an autumn sun; with a heavy deodand on the lady Giulia's bright eyes.

There seems, however, to have been little doubt at the time that Alessandro was the murderer. He was unquestionably quite capable of committing the act without the shadow of a scruple. And it is equally certain that he had a very strong interest in Ippolito's death, and especially in preventing him from accomplishing the errand on which he was then bound. Still these facts would be of course likely to draw the suspicions of that very suspicious age on Alessandro, and therefore diminish the weight to be attached to that general opinion of the contemporary public. But Varchi adduces three reasons which were considered to bring the matter very nearly home to the duke. And it must be admitted that the two latter have much weight. The first is worth nothing, except to show what sort of circumstances appeared to the Italian mind of that day to be of the nature of evidence on such a question.

This first of Varchi's proofs against Alessandro consists in the fact, that when upon some occasion the death of

Ippolito was spoken of in Florence, some of the friends of the duke remarked, 'Ay, ay! we know how to keep the flies away from our noses!'

The second is more cogent. The seneschal, Giovanni Andrea, as soon as he recovered his freedom, went immediately to Florence, and remained several days in the house of Alessandro. He went thence to his own country, Borgo San Sepolcro, a little town under the Apennines, about forty miles to the south-east of Florence, where he lived for some months, till he was one day stoned to death as a poisoner by a sudden ebullition of the popular indignation. Now it certainly is very difficult to account for the friendly reception by Alessandro of a man just let out of a prison to which he had been consigned as the murderer of his kinsman, and who was strongly suspected of having been his own instrument, on any other supposition than that of his having really been such.

The third proof of the duke's guilt adduced by Varchi is, however, the most conclusive; and if the incident is accurately related, may be held almost to settle the question. Signor Pandolfo Martelli, who was at the time very intimate with Alessandro Vitelli, the duke's captain of the guards, and most intimate confidant, declared that on his entering upon one occasion the bedroom of the duke together with Vitelli, the former, before he was aware of the presence of Martelli, who was hidden from him by the bed, began congratulating Vitelli 'on the death of the cardinal having fallen out according to their desire.' Still, it may be objected that the historian's words, if they accurately represent the nature of the conversation overheard by Martelli, are not inconsistent with the hypothesis that the cardinal died a natural death.

However the real fact may have been, the character of Alessandro, first Medicean duke and despot of Florence,

was not one to be affected by a murder or two more or less. It was in any case only a sort of assassination duel. For the chivalrous, frank, admired Ippolito had, as has been seen, made an unsuccessful attempt to have Alessandro murdered. The character of the times is equally well marked by the generality of the contemporary belief that the duke was guilty of the murder, whether in fact he were so or not. And it is in the character of the times, rather than in that of the individual Alessandro, that we have any interest.

This is further illustrated by another direction taken by the suspicions set afloat by the cardinal's death. Varchi says that some persons, Segni says Alessandro's friends only, attributed the murder to Paul III. It was urged that Ippolito was in possession of all the most lucrative appointments in Rome; that these were immediately given when vacated by him to Cardinal Farnese, by the pope, his kinsman; and that it was natural to suppose, therefore, that his holiness had caused the murder of the incumbent in order to get the appointments into his hands. It was also whispered by the gossips of Rome, that when the cardinal was dying, a despatch was sent to Pope Paul to beg a little of a certain oil, known to be a sure antidote to all poison, which he was said to possess; but that an excuse was made that the man who had this precious remedy in his custody could not at the moment be found; and so no oil was sent to the dying man.

History will have probably little difficulty in acquitting Paul III. of having had anything to do with the Cardinal Ippolito's death. But in this case also the existence of the suspicion, and the grounds on which it was based, are to us the most interesting facts in the matter.

The servants of the cardinal were bent on demonstrating their affection for their master, as Lorenzo Strozzi tells

us, by tearing to pieces the seneschal accused of poisoning him. And it was with great difficulty that Piero Strozzi, by his father's directions, succeeded in conveying him in safety to Rome. Filippo was exceedingly anxious that the man should be subjected to a regular judicial examination, in order to obtain undeniable proof of Alessandro's guilt. The death of the cardinal was a great blow to his hopes of inducing the emperor to depose the duke. Not only was his application, and his denunciation to Charles of the atrocities of Alessandro, which, Medici as he was, could not but have had much weight, lost to the cause, but, what was more important, there was now no means by which, failing Alessandro, the emperor could make his own son-in-law despot of Florence. As long as Ippolito was alive, and Alessandro unmarried, it might have been possible, Strozzi thought, to induce him to choose the former instead of the latter for his son-in-law. But it was quite another thing to persuade him to give up altogether the scheme of making Florence his own by the marriage of his daughter Margarita. Nevertheless, Strozzi thought, as his brother tells us, that if the guilt of the poisoning—not merely a man, that would have been nothing, but—*a cardinal*, could be satisfactorily brought home to Alessandro, the emperor would feel himself obliged, not by horror for the crime, but by shame, to break off the proposed match, and take from him the sovereignty of Florence.

It is very curious to mark the persistence and recurrence of the idea, even among the stout republicans of democratic Florence, that 'Cæsar' was to be appealed to as an authority supreme over peoples and princes, with power, and even in some sort acknowledged right, to give and take away Italian crowns.

At first the seneschal confirmed at Rome his previous

statement, describing at large the appearance and colour of the poison, asserting that Alessandro was his employer, and stating that he received the poison from one Otto da Montaguto, a servant of the duke. He afterwards denied both these confessions, and, despite all Filippo could say to Pope Paul on the subject, was ultimately released. The officers of justice who had had the duty of examining him were, as Lorenzo Strozzi remarks, on this occasion also those who had been appointed by Clement, and were consequently desirous of screening Alessandro. They reported to the pope that there was no evidence to justify them in detaining the seneschal. And his holiness, fearing, says Lorenzo, that if he showed any desire to press the matter, he might offend 'Cæsar,' by appearing actuated by a wish to impede the marriage of his daughter with the duke, set him at liberty.

Here again the assignment of motive is curious, and worthy of being clearly set forth. The emperor is desirous of giving his daughter to the duke. The duke is suspected of poisoning the cardinal. The pope is suspected of being unwilling that the crime should be proved against the duke, because he fears that he should thereby be doing an ill turn to the emperor. Why does the pope think that the emperor would consider it an ill turn if he were to allow his proposed son-in-law to be proved a murderer? Because his holiness takes it quite as a matter of course, that the emperor would still wish to give his daughter to the murderer, knowing him to be such, if only the matter were not so publicly proved against him as to make the doing so too scandalous in the face of Europe. And the historians who develop all the intricacies of conduct produced by such motives and considerations, they too consider it quite normal—quite in the ordinary course of things, that men should so act

and be so moved to act. They express neither surprise nor disapprobation; and might be supposed absolutely ignorant of the distinctions of vice and virtue, nobleness and baseness, were it not that it is ever assumed by them as a matter of course, that the actors to whom they attribute such acts and motives always profess to be moved by quite other considerations. The whole system of avowed and ostensible motive is placed in the same category as the modern 'not at home!' which expresses to a visitor that he is not wanted. Nobody believes it, nor is expected to believe it as a fact; but it is deemed more decorous and agreeable to say so than to avow the naked truth.

And this is the state of social morality produced, as certainly and necessarily as grass is produced from grass seed, by the dominance of a system of religion which all the classes of a society have to affect to believe, but which is in fact believed only by the more ignorant and lowly members of it.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Cardinals Ridolfi and Salviati.—Expedition to Naples to plead the cause of Florence before Charles V.—Alessandro also goes to Naples.—His attendants.—He is favourably received by the emperor.—Strozzi makes a false move.—Imperial pretensions.—Complaints of the exiles against Alessandro.—The Spanish minister attempts in vain to make matters pleasant.—Guicciardini again.—His defence.—Reply of the exiles.—The cash department of the great cause of the exiles *versus* Alessandro.—Strozzi holds his own in *this* part of the business.—The emperor, too, shows himself a master mind in this department.—The exiles understand that their cause is hopeless.—Their last protest.

Of course the plans both of Strozzi and the 'fuorusciti,' were all thrown out by the unlooked-for death of Ippolito. The former, moreover, was violently attacked by the emperor's ambassador at the papal court, and by the viceroy of Naples, for having taken upon himself to remove the man accused of administering poison to the late cardinal out of the dominions of the emperor where the deed was done. They sent orders to Itri for the arrest of Piero Strozzi, who had been detained there by taking care of Bernardino Salviati, who had fallen ill at that place. But his father, having received intelligence of their intention, despatched a messenger, who was in time to warn Piero to escape.

There still remained two men whose position and connection with the now all but extinct elder branch of the Medici were such as to add some weight to their repre-

sentations respecting Alessandro and his government. These were the Cardinals Ridolfi and Salviati, the sons of two sisters of Leo X. They had been the intimate friends and advisers of Ippolito in the steps he had lately taken against Alessandro; and were consequently irreparably committed to hostility to him. It was to these two cardinals, therefore, that Filippo now turned, and succeeded in persuading them to continue the scheme of appealing to the emperor, even although the ousting of Alessandro, and not the substitution of another Medicean prince, was now the only object to be attained. It was determined, therefore, that their eminences and Strozzi himself should accompany a select number of the exiles to Naples, there to plead the cause of Florence against the duke before the tribunal of the emperor.

Upon this occasion again the banker had to supply the sinews of the war. Their eminences Ridolfi and Salviati professed their readiness to go on the errand proposed to them to Naples; but either could not or would not travel at their own cost. So Filippo as usual, 'in order to facilitate matters, offered and supplied both of them, and also those of the exiles who were to go to Naples, with such sums of money as were necessary, according to the rank of each of them to make the journey, and support themselves there.'

It was in the first days of December, 1535, that the notable cavalcade, eighty horsemen in all, says Lorenzo Strozzi, with the two cardinals and Filippo Strozzi at their head, rode out of Rome on their way to Naples, and arrived there a day or two before the emperor reached that city.

Alessandro, on the other hand, who was perfectly well informed of every movement of the exiles, after much doubting upon the subject, at length determined that he

too would go to meet the emperor in Naples, to answer to the complaints brought against him, and plead for his promised wife and his crown in person. He started from Florence on the 19th of December,[1] 'taking with him all his court clothed in mourning, for the deaths of Clement and the Cardinal Ippolito.'[2] He took with him also the Archbishop of Pisa, Signor Cosimo de' Medici, the representative of the younger branch of the house; Messer Giovanni Batista Ricasoli, Bishop of Pistoia; Messer Francesco Guicciardini, the historian; Francesco Vettori, Strozzi's friend and correspondent, who thus found himself and Filippo on opposite sides of the question; Matteo Strozzi, a cousin of Filippo, and now opposed to him in politics, together with many other citizens, adherents and relatives of the Medici, among whom we find mentioned a certain Lorenzo de' Medici, sometimes called Lorenzino, who was, like Cosimo, a scion of the younger branch, and a distant cousin of his, the common ancestor having been the great-grandfather. This Lorenzo, who appears now in the train of Alessandro as a partisan of his, and consequently an opponent of the Strozzi, became afterwards brother-in-law to two of Filippo's sons, his sister Laudomia having married Piero, and his sister Maddalena Roberto Strozzi.

He has been thus specially introduced to the reader, because we shall hear more of him before our story is ended.

On his way to Naples, Alessandro halted a day or two at Rome, to pay his respects to the pope. The walls of Rome, says Varchi, were placarded on occasion of his visit by the Florentine exiles with 'Viva Alessandro di Collevecchio;' by which it was meant to insult him, by alluding to the report that his mother was a peasant girl

[1] Varchi says the 21st, vol. iii. p. 134. [2] Ibid.

of the village so named. Alessandro, however, only laughed at them, saying that he was obliged to them for letting him know what his origin was, for it was more than he had ever known himself. Another insult prepared for him was a citation served on him in regular form as a debtor, by order of Filippo Strozzi, on account of the moneys lent him for the building of the new fortress of Florence.

When he reached Naples, the emperor had already arrived; and of course intrigues, meetings, open and secret, debatings, quarrels between the partisans of the duke, those of the cardinals, the exiles, and the courtiers in the imperial suite, began instantly, and were carried on incessantly. The cardinals and Strozzi had already had three or four interviews with Charles, which, as nothing transpired of what passed at them, produced some little jealousy among the body of the exiles, who suspected that Strozzi and his most reverend colleagues might be seeking their own private interest, rather than that of the allied parties. It was not altogether an absurd or outrageous suspicion. No discussion, however, was suffered to appear; and it was decided that a petition embodying all the complaints against the duke, should be drawn up by Messer Salvestro Aldobrandini, a doctor of law, and one of the leading men among the exiles.

Meanwhile Alessandro had been most graciously received by the emperor, and was told by him that he might go and visit at once his future wife. This was deemed by the patriots and their allies for the time being, Strozzi, and the cardinals, an exceedingly bad symptom for them. And they were perfectly right in so considering it; for there could be no doubt whatever that the wife and Florence would go together. There was not the remotest possibility that the great arbiter of their

destinies should pronounce Alessandro unfit to govern the dominions that had been assigned to him, and yet give him his daughter to wife. It was perfectly understood on all sides that the confiscated liberties of Florence were to be the bride's dower; and that for Alessandro it was no crown no wife, and equally certainly no wife no crown. And, indeed, the forms of the original agreement between Charles and Clement on the subject justified the emperor in insisting that the two should go together. The promise of Margarita's hand had been made contingent on the duke's being 'in quiet and peaceful possession' of the dominion of Florence when the time should come for the solemnization of the marriage. And this condition he could hardly be said to fulfil when so large a portion of the most distinguished men in the country were clamorous for his deposition. It was undeniable, therefore, that 'Cæsar' might break off the match without in any degree breaking his word, if, indeed, that were any object to an imperial mind. So the opponents of Alessandro thought, reasonably enough, that this immediate sending of the criminal awaiting his trial to visit his intended bride looked very like an indication that the whole matter was already prejudged in the imperial mind.

But Filippo and the two cardinals made a false move when, losing their temper, as apparently was the case, they assumed all this in their communications with the emperor's ministers Covos and Granvelle. However accurately the fact, it was affronting to the imperial dignity that it should be openly taken for granted that the great 'Cæsar' was bent on selling his daughter for the establishment in Florence of a dynasty dependent on him. And the mistake brought down on them a sharp and sudden rap on the knuckles. Such men as Filippo

Strozzi and the two Medicean cardinals ought surely to have known that no more uncourtly deed could be done, than that which simply clothes with words, even laudatory, the baseness of a crowned head. Such words might have the effect of making even a 'Cæsar' feel the momentary sensation of shame. And nothing is less easily forgiven by a glorious monarch than such an untoward error. The truth probably was, that the Florentine cardinals and Strozzi deemed it so much a matter of course that Charles should act as he did, were so conscious that they would in a similar position have done the same themselves, and would have so little thought it possible that any one should dream of their doing otherwise, that it did not occur to them that there could be offence in taking it for granted, that if Charles was still minded to give his daughter to Alessandro, it was because he purposed maintaining him in his sovereignty let what might be charged against him.

When, therefore, Alessandro was at once received with an intimation that he might go and visit his bride, Strozzi and the cardinals waited on the imperial ministers, and told them, that although they were the nearest remaining family connections of the duke, their object in coming to Naples on the present occasion was not to be present at his nuptials; and that as they could not but consider the prosecution of this marriage as a definitive settlement of the business on which they had sought an audience of his imperial majesty, they might as well take their leave.[1]

The haughty Spaniards, Covos and Granvelle, answered them, that they were meddling with matters with which they had no concern; that his imperial majesty had a right, they presumed, to dispose of his daughter in

[1] Vita di Filippo Strozzi. Ed. cit., p. lxxxv.

marriage as he thought fit without consulting them on the subject; that if they had any grievances to submit to the emperor, they had better do so in writing, and confine themselves to such matters as regarded their own interests.

For it was not the policy of the emperor in any way to discourage the citizens of an Italian state from coming to complain to him against their sovereign. Such an elevation of his authority into a suzerainty over the princes of the peninsula suited the imperial book perfectly well. This appeal to him to judge between Alessandro and his subjects was extremely agreeable to Charles; and it is quite intelligible that he wished to take the position of judge in such a cause, irrespectively of any interest in the matter which he might be supposed to have by reason of the impending marriage of his daughter. And this pretension is very significantly put forward at the conclusion of the formal award eventually published by the emperor; in which he speaks of the injunctions therein laid on the duke, as 'ordained by his majesty in the privilege conceded to him by his majesty for the regulation of the degree of authority which he was to have in the Florentine republic.' And both parties in the quarrel are required to admit that the emperor has 'full authority to pronounce and give sentence in case either party shall act in contravention of the present decision, and to impose on the party so acting whatsoever punishments he may please, in such manner as may to him seem good, according to his own unfettered will.'

The paper drawn up by Salvestro Aldobrandini for presentation to the emperor is given at length by Varchi, and occupies nearly eleven large octavo pages. The historian Segni, summing up the complaints contained in it, says, that 'they were all reducible to these: that the

duke was cruel towards the citizens and his subjects in general, punishing every least transgression with excessive severity, and by means of his creatures making use of new and atrocious kinds of infliction; that he was unjust in the distribution of the magistracies, giving many of them to foreigners *and to priests, against all civil usage; showing thereby his desire to obliterate every vestige of political life;* that even in outward appearance he had shown the same tendency, having put out of fashion in the city the old civic dress, so that the citizens were seen in capes and short jerkins, and those who retained the old civic gown and hood were ridiculed by his creatures; that he had imposed intolerable taxes throughout the city and territory, in defiance of every law and custom hitherto observed; that 'moreover he had done this, not for any just and necessary purpose, but unnecessarily, and for waste in luxury and useless extravagance; that his profligacy was such that the honour of many families, whom they named, had been wounded by his treatment of their female members; nunneries had in many instances been desecrated by him, and forcible abductions committed by night in the city, to his great infamy; lastly, that he was a poisoner and murderer by his own hand,—instancing as examples Giorgio Ridolfi, and Luisa, the daughter of Filippo Strozzi; for all which impious and abominable actions of the duke they pray the emperor not to give him his daughter in marriage, and not to maintain as despot of the city so odious and abominable a monster.'

The decorous and courtly ministers of the emperor seem to have been quite aghast at the list of atrocities thus openly and in very plain terms alleged against a sovereign prince, and one, moreover, who was about to become their emperor's son-in-law. It is not to be supposed that they were really previously unaware of the nature of the

charges to be brought forward, or even that the emperor himself was so. For, putting aside the informal notices of all that had been going on between Alessandro and his subjects, which must more or less accurately have reached him, the representatives of the exiles had already, before the arrival of Alessandro in Naples, addressed to Charles a verbal statement of their wrongs. The spokesman chosen by them was Jacopo Nardi, the historian; and Varchi, his brother author, gives his oration at great length. The latter, it is true, adds, that 'the emperor, whether it were that he did not hear Jacopo, who, being an old man and timid, spoke low; or whether it were that, as is usual with those who have to judge causes, he did not choose to let his intentions be known, replied shortly and generally that the duke would soon arrive, and that then justice should be done.' Still we must suppose that, despite old Jacopo Nardi's mumbling, the emperor was not altogether ignorant of the accusations against Alessandro.

But 'littera scripto manet;' and Covos and Granvelle felt that the formal paper presented to them by the exiles would become history, and would tell not only to all the world of contemporary Europe, but to all posterity, what were the crimes of which the prince was accused who was to be supported in his despotism by the emperor, and to whom that most catholic monarch, well instructed as to what manner of man he was, was to give his daughter.

The ministers therefore, when they had read the paper, sent for Strozzi and the cardinals, and used every effort to induce them to mitigate the tone of it.[1] Perhaps the exiles were not aware, they urged, that this paper had been demanded for the purpose of communicating a copy

[1] Vita di Filippo Strozzi. Ed. cit. p. lxxxv.

of it to the accused prince in order that he might answer it. Surely they could not wish that such a document, which must have the effect of making any reconciliation between them and the duke impossible, should be handed to him. If it was absolutely deemed essential that these accusations should be laid before the emperor, they—the ministers, Covos and Granvelle—would undertake to deliver privately to his majesty a paper containing them if the exiles would consent to remove the more offensive passages from the public document.

Filippo, says his brother, perceived clearly enough from this talk that the emperor was perfectly determined, in any case and at all hazards, to complete the marriage and confirm Alessandro in his sovereignty. It would seem, however, either that Strozzi was driven on in a course more direct and straightforward than was usual with him by the body of the exiles acting with him, or that for once resentment and hatred actuated him rather than policy, and a prudential regard to future contingencies; for his reply to the imperial ministers was, that all the accusations contained in the statement of grievances were no less true than foul; that the list of them might have been much lengthened; that if the accused had not been prevented by shame from committing such atrocities, it was not for them to be ashamed of declaring them; and that the grossness of the language of their complaints was necessitated by the impossibility of rehearsing indecent deeds in decent words. He thanked them for their well-intentioned hesitation; but concluded by begging them to forward both to the emperor and to Alessandro the document exactly as it was.

'A degree of animosity too great, perhaps, in a private man against so great a prince,' remarks his brother; thus most strangely reserving the only expression of direct

blame which occurs throughout his biography for about the first act of his brother with which we can sympathize.

The Spanish ministers were exceedingly disgusted by this obstinate audacity of a handful of plebeians daring, in the most indecorous and unconventional manner, to speak in plain terms of the crimes of a sovereign prince. But they had nothing for it but to transmit the paper to Charles and to Alessandro, with a request that he would reply to it.

The duke had come to Naples accompanied by four advisers and supporters, chosen from among the small number of such Florentines as he thought he could depend on. Of these four, one, Bartolommeo Valori, was a traitor to him in secret intelligence with Filippo Strozzi, and at every turn counselling Alessandro in a manner calculated to do injury as far as possible to his cause; but the principal of Alessandro's adherents was Francesco Guicciardini, who was true to his infamous patron, to his aim of destroying every germ of liberty in his native country, and to the witting and cynic preference of wrong to right, and evil to good, because he deemed it expedient for the immediate interests of his own fortunes. This clear but narrow-minded man, to whom in a greater degree, probably, than to any other one individual has been due all the degradation of his countrymen for the last three hundred years, had sufficient intelligence—not probably to comprehend the extent and consequences of the evil he was doing, but to know and confess to himself that it was evil. The irrefragable grounds on which so damning a conviction is founded may be seen in the recently-published volumes printed from his manuscripts for the first time; and especially in the 'Political and Civil Memoranda.'[1] So curious, but at the same time

[1] Opere inedite di Francesco Guicciardini, Firenze, 1857.

morally revolting, a picture of cynical immorality as these 'memoranda' of the great statesman and historian present the world has rarely seen; and they justify the assertion that he perfectly well knew that in now supporting Alessandro against the accusations of the citizens, he was not only defending an altogether indefensible monster of wickedness, but was labouring for the permanent injury and degradation of his country.

On Guicciardini now fell the task of replying to the indictment given in by the citizens. The paper which he drew up for this purpose is, as well as the accusation, given at full length by Varchi. It occupies nearly twenty large octavo pages. As to the political part of the accusations against the duke, it was not difficult, by going into a mass of detail, to 'throw dust into the eyes of foreign readers,' as Lorenzo Strozzi says, and prevent them from understanding how entirely every safeguard of liberty had been removed, and how totally the whole constitution had been changed since the capitulation of the city in 1530. As to the personal conduct of Alessandro, he sometimes denies, sometimes excuses, and sometimes falls back on assertions that some of his accusers were as bad as he, which was possibly not far from the truth; and only laboured under the disadvantage of being nothing to the purpose. On the whole, it remains on record as disgraceful an example of talent employed in an effort to make the worser seem the better cause, of the prostitution of high powers to a most ignoble use, as the world ever saw; and deep was the scorn which his countrymen expressed by branding him with the nickname of 'Messer Cerrettini,' a name infamous in Florentine annals as that of the well-remembered minister of the atrocities of the Duke of Athens, who, after the exile of his master, fell a victim to the fury of the populace.

The ministers of the emperor, on putting this answer into the hands of Strozzi, to be by him communicated to the 'fuorusciti,' remarked, that as to the political condition of Florence under the duke's government, if some of the citizens considered it to be not free enough, it was at least clear that others were well contented with it. To which Filippo, on behalf of the malcontents, replied that all the party petitioning against the duke would promise and bind themselves to accept contentedly whatever form of government those very men, who were now supporting Alessandro, might propose for the city, if the emperor would solemnly engage himself that such proposal should be carried out, whether it should decree the deposition and exile of the duke or otherwise. So sure were the exiles that even the most trusted supporters of Alessandro, could they be assured of his inability to injure them, would declare for his expulsion. The reply was, it must be admitted, a stringent one. Of course it did not suit the imperialists to pay any attention to it. Strozzi was ordered to convey the duke's reply to the exiles; and at the same time to let them understand that they were to make no answer to the duke's statements in his defence, but might draw up another paper expressing their wishes as to the nature of the constitution to be adopted under his sovereignty.

While these public and avowed steps were being taken by both parties, both were at least equally busy in underhand intrigues and attempts to gain the day by corruption. Alessandro was, it seems, so hard pressed for money by demands on all sides, and was so little sure as to the upshot of the imperial decision, that he was more than once on the point of leaving Naples secretly, and returning to reassume his dukedom without waiting for the emperor's sanction or his daughter. This would of course

have utterly ruined him. And his traitor counsellor Valori accordingly urged him to do so by every argument he could invent; and would have succeeded, says Varchi, had not Guicciardini, who of course saw clearly enough the madness of such a step, dissuaded him from it. The exiles were kept perfectly informed of all these doubts and difficulties in the hostile camp; and were induced by them to consent to prepare the second paper, as desired by the emperor's ministers. For though they had no hope of any good from any such proposal, and were inclined to refuse at once to prepare a scheme such as was demanded of them, their assent was a means of gaining time, during which some imprudence on the part of the duke might throw the game into their hands.

One heavy demand on Alessandro, which he found much difficulty in meeting, was an open and avowed one of sixty thousand crowns demanded by his imperial father-in-law as the price of his daughter's hand,—'an altogether new and by no means good practice,' remarks Lorenzo Strozzi,[1] 'for it is usual for wives to buy husbands, and not husbands wives,' adds the matter-of-fact biographer with all gravity and seriousness.

Strozzi on his side had not neglected to back the cause in which he had embarked by the power of cash. But the cautious capitalist was determined so to manage matters as not to part with his cash without getting what he wanted in return for it. There was a certain Piero Zappada, a Spaniard in the employment of Charles, to whom Strozzi promised twelve thousand ducats if the emperor should remove Alessandro from Florence. It seems hardly likely that this Zappada was in a position to be able to influence very efficaciously the imperial decision; and the suspicion arises, therefore, that he may have

[1] Vita di Filippo Strozzi. Ed. cit., p. lxxxix.

been merely the go-between by whose means it was intended decorously to bribe the emperor's ministers. The money was deposited by Strozzi in Zappada's presence in the hands of a monk in the Dominican convent at Naples, with orders to pay it over to the Spaniard on the emperor giving his decision against Alessandro. But as soon as it became clear, from the communication made to the exiles on the receipt of Alessandro's defence, that their cause was hopeless, Strozzi (guessing that the consideration of that fact might induce Señor Zappada to lay hands on the deposit) contrived to obtain access to it without his knowledge, removed the money, and filled the box which had contained it with rubbish. The result justified cautious Filippo's suspicion. For as soon as it was known, that nothing would be done by the emperor for the petitioners, the Spaniard hurried to the convent, and seizing on the chest, forcibly carried it off; to be rewarded with blank disappointment, and much ridicule from his companions and colleagues, when it was opened.

In due course the 'fuorusciti,' though, as has been said, quite hopeless of any good result from the step, gave in to the imperial ministers, as desired, a second document, in which a scheme of limited and constitutional government was drawn up, somewhat on the plan of those of Venice and Genoa, and attributing a similar degree of power to the duke. This of course was very far from what either Alessandro or Charles intended. And after a while a second reply on the part of the duke was handed to Strozzi for transmission to the exiles, which contained a statement of what he was willing to do to satisfy the city, and which they were given to understand must be taken to be final. The duke's promises, says Lorenzo Strozzi, amounted simply to a permission to the exiles to return, and re-enter into possession of their estates; and

even that 'not freely, but on certain conditions not very honourable.' This of course gave no guarantee whatever against a repetition of all the former excesses of their tyrant, and still less made any advance towards a free constitutional government.

It became known about the same time to the exiles, that Alessandro was expecting money from Florence to satisfy the demands of the emperor; so that no further hope remained of their adversary ruining his own cause by his precipitation and imprudence. Indeed, it would seem that the earlier payment of this money into the ever-hungry imperial coffers would have saved the unfortunate exiles much of that hope, which by its false flattering makes the heart sick, and a vast deal of expense and useless labour. For to complete the picture of imperial baseness, it would seem that Charles, that monarch of vast and profound views, as the historian Robertson calls him, extended the mighty grasp of his mind on this occasion to 'selling' his intended son-in-law as well as the petitioners against his enormities. The great imperial mind had never stooped for an instant to the thought of listening to the complaints of subjects against their prince. But his majesty, it seems, had, when making the bargain by which all these matters were arranged with Pope Clement of blessed memory, undertaken to pay two hundred thousand florins on the occasion of the marriage of Alessandro with his daughter Margarita, according to worthy Lorenzo Strozzi's good and recognized rule that wives should buy their husbands, and not *vice versâ*. But as the time for the marriage drew near, Charles began to think, that since he had no longer that crafty old Clement with 'views' almost as 'profound' as his own to play against him, he might find means of escaping this payment, and might on the contrary squeeze a little out of the bride-

groom. For this purpose it seemed only necessary to frighten him a little;—very easily done by pretending to listen to the complaints of the exiles, and (doing the while a bit of moral respectability, which Charles always liked when it could be done cheap) affecting to give much weight to the charges they brought forward. We have seen already, that this large and statesmanlike policy was rewarded with that success which ordinarily attends such lofty and far-sighted views.[1] The imperial father-in-law never paid the two hundred thousand florins, and pocketed his son-in-law's sixty thousand ducats; which, after all, was little enough for winking at all his daughter's husband's little frailties.

It was at length then clear to the Florentines that nothing was to be hoped from putting their trust in princes. Their error was a very excusable one; for they had not yet had much experience of sovereigns. But it *is* strange to find their descendants still trying to gather figs from thistles, after three hundred years' experience of the nature of the plant.

Before leaving Naples, Filippo Strozzi, the two cardinals, and the deputies of the general body of the 'fuorusciti,' had a meeting to consider,—not whether the insulting proposals made to them should be accepted; for of this no one among them thought for an instant,—but what reply should be made to the imperial communication. And at that meeting the following letter was agreed upon, which, as Varchi says, 'became celebrated throughout Italy as a noble and generous answer, truly worthy the Italians of a better age.' Lorenzo Strozzi has also inserted it at length in his life of his brother, remarking, that though short, it was so memorable for the high-minded

[1] All this is developed at length very composedly by worthy Varchi. Ed. cit., vol. iii. p. 227.

sentiments it embodies; that it was quickly spread throughout the whole of Christendom, and was deserving of preservation, that posterity might see with how much courage and greatness the cause of liberty was pleaded before the tribunal of the emperor by men who were before his eyes and in his power.

The document runs thus:—

'We did not come here to ask of his majesty under what conditions we were to submit ourselves to the despotism of Duke Alessandro, nor to obtain from him, by intercession of his majesty, pardon for that which we have voluntarily, justly, and agreeably to our duty done for the sake of our country's liberty. Neither were we brought here by any desire of recovering our property at the cost of returning as slaves to the native city which we quitted as freemen. We came here to demand of his majesty, trusting in his justice and uprightness, that true and entire freedom which his agents and ministers, acting in his name, promised to preserve to the city. We came to demand reintegration in their rights, property, and country for those good and worthy citizens who have been wrongfully despoiled of these things, in contravention of the pledged faith of his majesty. We at the same time offered to his majesty all the guarantees and security which he could wish, and deem right and honourable. (Security that the city would not separate itself from his alliance to substitute that of France, is what is meant.) But seeing by the note communicated to us by the agents and ministers of his majesty in his name, that much more weight is given to the desire of satisfying the Duke Alessandro than to the merits of our just and honest complaint; that the document handed to us does not even make any mention of liberty, and but little of the interests of the state in any way; that even the restoration of the

exiled Florentines is not freely granted, but is limited and subjected to conditions, just as though it were a favour and not a right that was asked; we under these circumstances do not know what other answer to give to the proposals made to us than this: that, determined as we are all of us to die as we have lived, freemen, we supplicate his majesty, that if he feels himself bound in conscience, to remove from the wretched and hapless city that cruel yoke of despotism which is destroying it (as we cannot but firmly hold and believe that he *is* bound, for the reasons several times laid before him both by word of mouth and by writing); he will then make such provisions for the welfare of the city as shall be in accordance with his pledged faith, and with the sincerity of his word; but that if his will and judgment be opposed to this, we must beg his majesty to permit us with his leave to await such time, as, with God's assistance, and his majesty's better information as to the righteousness of our cause, may fulfil our just and fair desires. At the same time we assure his majesty, that notwithstanding these hopes, we are all of us most entirely resolved never for the sake of our own private advantage to stain the purity and sincerity of our convictions, by failing in that pious affection and regard which all good citizens are bound to feel for their country.'

This was the last protest made by Florentine liberty.

Of course it is utterly superfluous to say that the effect produced on the underhung, saturnine, Flemish despot, who was then engaged in 'saving society' on a rather large scale, was—beyond a little natural indignation at the audacity of those burghers—absolutely nothing.

CHAPTER XV.

Celebration of the marriage between Alessandro and Margarita.—Strozzi attempts to avoid quarrelling with the emperor.—Francis I. pillages Strozzi;—and Charles V. robs him for letting himself be pillaged by his enemy.—Imprudent conduct of Filippo's son Piero.—Strozzi goes to Venice.—His intrigues with the French court.—Letters from Strozzi to Vettori.—Prison called 'Il Maschio' at Volterra.—Anecdote concerning it.—Filippo's patriotism.—Letter to him from Francis I.—Meeting with a French envoy.—Strozzi outlawed.—Consequences thereof.—Strozzi as a master and employer.

On the evening of the 29th of February, 1536, which was in that year the last day of carnival, there was a grand supper in Naples; at which Charles V., his ministers, his daughter, and his son-in-law, and his son-in-law's courtiers, celebrated the marriage which had that day been solemnized, and their united triumph over the last spasmodic struggle of liberty in Italy. The conquered exiles had departed, shaking the dust off their feet against dukes and emperors; to carry the tidings of the death of their last hope to the body who had deputed them. Many of them left among the revellers at the imperial board relatives, cousins, brothers even in one or two cases; for the line of division which separated the small minority of Alessandro's creatures, companions, and courtiers from the rest of their fellow-citizens had in many instances cut families in half. And the fact indicates, that adhesion or non-adhesion to the despot was

decided, not merely by traditional enmities and old party divisions, but by the individual characters of his friends and of his enemies. And it testifies very strikingly to the genuineness and sincerity of the abhorrence felt to his tyranny by the latter, that not one of those then in exile accepted the proffered offer of restoration to their homes and property, though the greater number of them were poor and in distress.[1]

Filippo, however, notwithstanding the high tone taken in the famous last protest of the 'fuorusciti,' thought it prudent to avoid leaving the emperor in anger. He had interests and large sums out both in Naples and Sicily, which were then part of the wide-spread dominions of Charles V. So he sought a last interview with Granvelle, and insinuated to him the possibility that the exiles might be brought to agree to the proposals which had been made to them, when his majesty the emperor should be shortly passing through Rome on his way northwards. For his own part, he said, he would spare no pains to induce them to come to terms. He was, he professed, only anxious for peace, as far as he was concerned; but it was very difficult for him to separate himself from the body of the exiles, for such conduct would bring upon him the accusation of being a renegade, and indifferent to the public welfare. This private attempt on the part of the wealthy banker to make his own peace separately with the emperor, is related by his brother with perfect apparent complacency. But for the credit of the general body of the exiles for liberty's sake, it is well to observe that it was a *private* attempt, and that he was in nowise authorized by any of the 'fuorusciti' to make any such statements. The two cardinals also, in taking leave of the emperor, held out expectations that all might be made

[1] Varchi. Ed. cit., vol. iii. p. 231.

smooth at Rome. But they, it must be remembered, had first joined the opponents of Alessandro as friends of Ippolito, and not as members of the exiled community; and had been induced to continue to make common cause with them after the death of the latter, solely by the influence of Strozzi.

Filippo, however, began very soon to feel in purse the disastrous results of having openly proclaimed enmity to 'the upper powers.' His brother complains, in the first place, of the enormous expenses which the expedition to Naples had occasioned him, as Piero his son had lodged and maintained the greater part of the exiles during their stay there. And now worse disasters and greater losses were at hand. The ambassador of Francis I. at Rome, Cardinal Bellay, had much disapproved of Strozzi's expedition to Naples, telling him that that was not the way to serve the king his master. Filippo, if we are to believe in the perfect exactitude of his biographer brother, answered energetically, that 'he was before all else a Florentine, and only secondarily a Frenchman;—that his duty and attention was to cry aloud to God and men for the liberty of his country, and to remain the perpetual ally and friend of whomsoever would grant him that prayer.' Now we can very easily understand that it was Filippo's policy to play off, as far as might be, the jealousy of the most Christian against the most Catholic monarch; and to give the former to understand, that if he wanted the support and alliance of the Florentine exiles against the Spanish ascendency in Tuscany, he must purchase it by doing more for them than Charles would do. And there can be little doubt that Francis and Filippo perfectly well understood each other's game. But all we have seen of our old acquaintance, Filippo Strozzi, would not lead us to recognize the above 'energetic' manner of speaking as

his style of addressing sovereign princes, or of seeking to compass the objects he had in view. The passages between him and Cardinal Bellay, which are translated by the radical patriot brother into such high-flown patriotic heroism, probably took in reality a much less violent form, and were limited to gentle and courtly insinuations to the effect, that if Francis wanted the Florentine exiles, he must pay the price for them.

The French king, however, was jealous of the application made to his rival; although he, as a brother monarch, must have guessed that there was little probability that Charles should consent to depose his intended son-in-law for the sake of establishing constitutional liberty in a country which he was anxious to keep under his own influence. And this royal jealousy showed itself by the sudden arrest and imprisonment of Francesco Bini, Filippo's agent at Lyons, for the non-payment of thirty thousand crowns remaining due of the money undertaken to be paid by Strozzi for Catherine's dower. It was in vain to point out to the royal creditor that this sum had never been either paid, or demanded, because his majesty had not yet repaid the much larger sum of fifty-nine thousand crowns lent him by Filippo previously. Monarchs cannot be expected to go into mercantile balancings of debtor and creditor accounts; and they are apt to take rather one-sided views of such matters. So Francis kept Filippo's agent close in prison till the thirty thousand crowns were paid down. As to the 'per-contra' fifty-nine thousand due from that 'first gentleman of his day' to Strozzi, they were still due at the time of the latter's death, and probably remain so to the present day.

At the same time Francis was far too royal-minded to bear any malice against the great capitalist on account of this little unpleasantness, and still condescended to have

recourse to him in his money matters. Fifteen thousand crowns were needed just then for the payment of a body of French troops in Italy, and Strozzi's bank at Lyons cashed the king's bills to that amount. Report turned the fifteen into fifty thousand; whereupon 'Cæsar' began to feel very jealous of such an extent of 'accommodation' afforded to his enemy, and consequently gave orders that inquisition should be made into all the property possessed by Strozzi in Naples and Sicily, and that it should all be sequestered by the ministers of the imperial revenue. 'This *accident*,' says Lorenzo, 'disturbed Filippo greatly, as he was very strongly of opinion that similar orders would be issued in all the other parts of the imperial dominions. And as it had never occurred to him that such steps would be adopted before he openly declared hostility to his majesty or some one of his friends, confederates, or dependents, he had not forbidden any of his agents to carry on operations in the countries under the dominion of the emperor; so that it happened that a large part of his capital was at that time invested in Spain and Flanders.' [1]

Alarmed very seriously at this danger—unnecessarily, as it turned out, for the emperor did not take any measures against him except in Naples and Sicily—Filippo sent his son Piero into France to seek the assistance of the king in making head against these disasters. Francis professed himself ready to do all in his power to serve him. But this expedition of Piero into France led to consequences that eventually proved far more seriously injurious to his father than the anticipated misfortunes which he was sent there to remedy. For Francis was so well pleased with Piero Strozzi, that he offered him and persuaded him to accept the command of a thousand men

[1] Vita di Filippo Strozzi. Ed. cit., p. xciii.

destined for the war in Piedmont. This of course compromised Filippo with the emperor to a degree which his prudence had never contemplated, and placed him in a position of overt hostility to the imperial interests, which it had been, during all his intrigues against Alessandro, his especial care to avoid. It is easy to see how this inconsiderate step on the part of Piero might have led to the immediate ruin of his father's fortune. And it did in point of fact form the starting point of a series of events which led to his destruction. Filippo saw at once, not all the danger, nor the exact nature of the danger, with which he was threatened by this public identification of the name of Strozzi with the party and interests of the King of France; for no amount of human foresight could have anticipated the events which were to mould the course so imprudently taken by his son, and his own line of action adopted in consequence of it, to the fatal issues in which they eventually resulted. But he saw enough to make him angry with his son far beyond his usual unimpassioned habits. He would not hear of his acceptance of any such appointment, and strove to induce him to break his engagement with the king. But Piero declared that he had plighted his faith, and that no consideration whatever should induce him to break it.

The first step which appeared to Strozzi to be rendered expedient by the new position in which he thus unwillingly found himself was to quit Rome, in which place—'being, as it is, a city especially adapted for the perpetration of deeds of violence,'[1]—he was well aware he was not in safety. He determined, therefore, to go to Venice, 'it being the special character of that noble republic to receive and welcome joyfully all exiles, and particularly such as are wealthy and of notable condition.'[2] He received, his

[1] Vita di Filippo Strozzi. Ed. cit., p. xciii. [2] Ibid.

brother goes on to say, a safe-conduct, couched in the most ample terms, and a permission for him and all his family to carry arms. The document is extant, and bears date the 19th of June, 1536; but there is no mention in it of bearing arms. It promises him that he shall enjoy 'that quiet and security which all the other inhabitants of this our city enjoy.'

That Filippo was thus, much against his will, precipitated into open enmity to all the imperial party in Italy by the act of his son Piero, and that this was the beginning of the train of circumstances that ended in his final destruction, is the representation of his brother. And it is quite probable that it was much against his will that his son thus compelled him prematurely to throw off the mask. But we have the evidence of certain letters—always those inexorable tell-tale letters that are so constantly giving the lie to fair-semblance-loving Mnemosyne's decorous fictions —that Strozzi was in treasonable correspondence with France immediately after his return from the unsuccessful pleading at Naples.

There is a letter[1] to Strozzi, then in Bologna, from Georges d'Armagnac, Bishop of Rodez, and Georges de Selva, Bishop of Lavaur, French ambassadors in Venice, bearing date 24th January, 1536, in which those agents argue, from considerations of the respective military situations of the emperor and of their own master, that little can be done for Florence by the former, and much by the latter. They allude also to designs, evidently participated in by their correspondent, 'equally useful and even necessary, not only to that city, but to all Italy.'

There is also a letter from Strozzi[2] to his old corre-

[1] Printed in the collection appended as illustrations to Niccolini's tragedy.

[2] Ibid.

spondent, Francesco Vettori, bearing date Bologna, 16th February, 1536. These two friends were now decidedly partisans of different mortally opposed factions; Vettori adhering to the established order of things and the imperial interests in Florence, and Strozzi, though he still strives to hide as far as possible the extent of his connection with France, having thrown in his lot with the opposite party. Yet, unlike the generality of Italians under such circumstances, they had not suffered political differences to break their life-long friendship.

Filippo assures his old 'compare,' as he still addresses him, that of all the consequences of exile, the loss of his society grieves him the most. He asks for the names of the exiles who had been authorized by recent decree to return; and would be glad to hear, he says significantly, that some who had been thrown into prison in the tower of Volterra had been liberated, since, if the law which had been passed respecting the exiles, and which included those prisoners, be not executed, there is reason to suspect that it will not be observed with regard to others. This tower of Volterra is still extant, standing isolated in the vast court-yard of the modern prison, which crowns the lofty rock of Volterra, and is the principal object in the old Etruscan city. A more fearful and atrocious dungeon was never invented by the suspicious and trembling cruelty of despotism. The interior of the tower is reached by a drawbridge communicating with other buildings, which gives entrance through a small door on the second story of the prison. From this entrance a narrow stair ascends to the upper stories, and descends to those below. The lowest is a horrible den, occupying the entire interior of the tower, vaulted in the form of a dome, and lighted only by one round hole, about the size of a man's head, which pierces a thickness

of wall of some twenty to thirty feet. The effect is, that the chamber is perfectly dark, with one glaring eye of light staring into its impenetrable blackness. It might have been supposed that these arrangements would have sufficed to glut the vindictive hatred of the most 'royal-minded' despot for its victims. But a diabolical ingenuity has devised the means of adding fearfully to the torments of the captives consigned to this horrible place, by excavating a profound pit in the centre of the dungeon, so large as to leave only a pathway some five or six feet in width between the wall and the utterly unprotected edge of the abyss. By this fiendish invention the prisoner was, in the profound darkness, compelled to limit his locomotion to a mill-horse-like circuit around the wall, with which he was obliged to be continually in contact if he would avoid the danger of falling into the unknown depth below. It is a piteous thing to mark the deep-worn trace of miserable feet around this gangway between the wall and the pit, to note the polishing which shrinking shoulders in nervous dread of the hidden chasm have imparted to the stones, and above all, to observe the deep marks that have been worn in the marble at the opening of the solitary eye-hole, by the leaning there of captives, tantalizing themselves during the long hours with this far-off glimpse of the light of the sun. This prison has been unused, as may be supposed, for many generations. The last inmate was a certain ferocious Count of the Maremma, who, among a host of other atrocities, had the imprudence to amuse himself by interring a lot of Franciscan friars in a standing position, so that their heads only appeared above the surface of the soil, and then bowling at them from a distance with a heavy marble ball. How the shaven tops of the living balls in that horridly grotesque bowling-grouud must have studded, to

his half-mad vision, the unseen floor of his dungeon, and how the agonized eyes of the wretched victims must have glared at him out of the darkness! For if ever there was a prison artistically calculated to drive its tenant to madness, it is that tower 'Il Maschio,'—the male, they call it, to distinguish it from another ancient tower within the fortress, called 'the female,'—on the heights of Volterra, to which Alessandro condemned several of his opponents who were foolish enough to be beguiled by proffers of reconciliation to trust themselves in his hands, and among others, one Vincenzo Martelli, whose fault was having during that Naples trial-time written a sonnet against him.

Strozzi particularly asks after this unhappy poet in his letter to Vettori. But I find no reply to his inquiry.

Filippo goes on, in accordance with his policy of concealing to the utmost of his power from his friends as well as his enemies at Florence the machinations against Alessandro in which he was engaged, to assure Vettori, that 'he had lost all credit with the fuorusciti,' which mattered little to him, since as long as his conscience was clear as regarded his country, he should care nothing for any calumnies or attacks. 'My son Piero,' he writes, in a later part of the same letter, 'has been commanded to come hither (to Bologna), where it is thought that the fire is alight—(*i. e.*, that the exiles are ready to join France in making a hostile attempt on Florence). In a few days he will be here, and some of his stanchest friends will follow him. I shall await his coming, that I may use such persuasions to him as I may judge expedient. And if, being in company as he will be with others, it is possible to make him hear reason, I will try whether paternal authority has any weight with him. For although he set it wholly at

naught when he took up arms (when he entered, that is, into the service of Francis I.), it may be that he will be more amenable to it at present. As for myself, do not qualify me as either French or Spanish, but as Florentine; for such in all my actions you will ever find me. And I would rather that my country should be safe, even though as an exile I have no part in it, than that I should owe my return to its destruction.'

Another letter, of the 28th of February, 1836, from Strozzi, still at Bologna, to the same correspondent, assures him that he continues firm in the same sentiments, of which it would seem that Vettori has manifested some doubt, and speaks of his having to sustain several severe contests with the exiles, who were bent on active hostilities against Florence. But the hardest battle of all, he says, on this subject will be that with his son Piero, when he arrives, seeing that he is a paid servant of the French king—*persona stipendiata.* The French ambassadors, he says, had strongly urged his taking part in the meditated expedition against Florence, and were much discontented by his refusal.

The position and line of conduct which Strozzi represents himself to be holding in these letters, and which his brother also attributes to him in his biography, were truly dignified, high-minded, and patriotic. An exile from his country, in which, were he restored to it, one of the most distinguished stations would be his own, suffering confiscation of his paternal home and large estates, without any hope of reconciliation with the government, and with a hundred reasons for feeling the most bitter personal hatred against the sovereign, he yet refuses to be a party to exposing the citizens to the horrors of war, and to all the misery inevitable on the displacement of one government and party by

another violently hostile one. If such were really Filippo's veritable position at this critical period, and his genuine sentiments and wishes, we should have to accord him, at least as a citizen, a higher place in our esteem than we have hitherto seen reason to award him. If in the case of a country, situated as Florence then was, the question be as to the expediency of resisting the dominant despotism by the citizens themselves, for the establishment of liberty in its stead, the timidity which should hang aloof from the enterprise for fear of the hard knocks to itself or to others that must ensue in prosecution of it, would have little claim to deem itself or be deemed patriotism. For in such a case men struggle for the well-being, temporal and eternal, of their children and their children's children. But the expulsion of Alexander, the creature of Charles, by the help of Francis, the rival of Charles, who wished to get just all that Charles wanted to keep for himself, was an enterprise of a very different sort. It was but the pulling down of one despotic ascendency to establish another in its place. And if Filippo Strozzi did really set his face against an enterprise in which he personally would have certainly been so large a gainer, he acted with true patriotism.

But did he do so? Did any most miraculous gourd ever shoot up with rapidity so wondrous, as must have been the growth of our friend Filippo's patriotic love of his country, which but too clearly did not exist even in the germ, when only a very few years ago he was engaged in all the dirtiest work of the establishment of the Medicean despotism? Can it be that the same man, who was earning his ten per cent. pawnbrokerage by making out lists of proscription for Clement VII. in 1531, could be in 1536 so virtuously unwilling to expose his fellow-citizens

to possible harm, for the sake of recovering all that was dearest to him? Are we to suppose that the sharer and abettor of Alessandro's excesses, and of the profligacy which carried shame and ruin into so many a home, had become so moralized by the outrage committed by his pupil in vice against his own daughter, as to be checked in his desire to avenge the wrong by the consideration that other hearth-stones might be made cold in the process?

Strozzi was in all probability holding back from the advances of France, and restraining the more violent and less politic among the exiles until he could see his way to an advantageous attack more clearly. But it is extremely difficult to believe that this was caused by the motives he so magniloquently puts forward to Vettori.

There is a damaging letter extant from Francis I. to Filippo, bearing date a few months later, on the 6th of July, 1536, which proves at all events, that he, Francis, had reason to believe that Strozzi was not avèrse to joining in his plans for attacking Florence.

'Messer Filippo Strozzi,' writes the king, 'I think that you are sufficiently aware of the good-will and affection I bear, not only to you and all your family and allies, but also to the public welfare of Florence. It is unnecessary, therefore, to say anything more at length on that head. I have only to mention that, seeing the point which matters have reached at the present time, I have thought it well to send Messer Emilio Ferretti, counsellor in my court of parliament at Paris, and bearer of this letter, to present himself to you and your friends, to learn from you and from them, and to come to a clear understanding, whether there is any way or opportunity by which I can do anything for you, and for them, and for the aforesaid republic of Florence. And I beg that you

will give me the most ample information through him, as to what in your opinion can and should be done for that purpose. And you may be sure, that if you will give me this information, I will take such steps as will let you see very clearly how much I desire to do for you and your friends, and consequently for the liberty of the said Florence. And thereupon I pray God to have you in his safe and most holy keeping.

'FRANCESCO.

(Countersigned) 'LE BRETON.'

We have another letter written a few days later, on the 26th of the same month of July, from the above-named envoy Ferretti to Strozzi, who was then once again in Rome. He had hoped to meet Filippo in Venice, but not finding him there, had written thence to him in Rome. 'We[1] afterwards, however, came to the decision,' he writes, 'that I should not proceed to Rome, in order not to excite more attention than can be helped, but only to Gualdo,[2] where we thought that your excellency might come to meet me without inconvenience and without suspicion. I have thought it as well, therefore, to write hence,[3] that if it pleases you to come, your excellency may do so at once, which in my opinion would be the best plan. Should this not suit you, I beg you will let me know where you would wish that I should come to meet you. And I will not fail to act accordingly in obedience to the orders of the king, and no less certainly for the sake of seeing and speaking with your excellency.'

Another letter from Giuliano Soderini, one of the lead-

[1] The envoys of Francis in Venice are apparently alluded to.

[2] Gualdo is a small town in the province of Perugia, between that city and Nocera.

[3] The letter is dated from Macerata, a town on the road to Rome beyond Ancona.

ing men among the exiles, written two days later from Macerata, tells Strozzi of the arrangement made for the meeting with the French envoy at Gualdo; and trusts that all is going well with him; 'seeing that the necessities of our country, and the news which will reach you with this, testify sufficiently how much need our affairs have of your prosperity and the safety of your person.'

It is tolerably clear from these letters that Strozzi was at this time, July 1536, implicated in the designs of Francis, if he had not been so at the date of the letters to Vettori in the previous winter. It may be that he was led into more overt hostility to Alessandro by a circumstance which occurred probably in the interval. The duke had repeatedly entreated the emperor to permit him to proceed to extremities against Strozzi; urging that 'it dishonoured him to be prevented from doing all the harm he could to enemies who would lose no chance of injuring him.'[1] But Charles had always refused his consent to any steps of the kind. When, however, the imperial jealousy was roused by that sum of money furnished, as has been seen, by Filippo to his enemy Francis, he gave full licence to Alessandro to do his worst against Strozzi, his family, and his property. The duke instantly availed himself of the permission by proclaiming Filippo and his sons rebels and outlaws, and declaring all their property in Florence and the territory thereof confiscated. The latter decree did little more than avow formally what was practically the case before. But the outlawry was likely to produce very serious consequences to the great banker. For it was contrary to law for any Florentine to have dealings of any sort with a rebel. And the three great banking establishments which Strozzi had in Rome, Venice, and Lyons, were conducted almost

[1] Vita di Filippo Strozzi. Ed. cit., p. xciv.

entirely by Florentines; and the number of persons thus employed, and utterly unreplaceable, especially as regarded the positions of management and confidence, was very large.

Of course this was an extremely serious blow; and was very possibly the means of driving Filippo to join more overtly and actively the plans of the other exiles, and their negotiations with France. But the results of it turned out to be much less injurious than there was reason to expect; and the sequel of the incident shows us the great banker and capitalist in what was probably his most favourable aspect—as a master and employer. On receiving the news of his outlawry, he immediately sent circulars to all the Florentines in his service at Rome, Venice, and Lyons, announcing to them the fact, pointing out the law on the subject, and telling them, one and all, that as continuance in his employ would involve a participation in his sentence, they would do well to provide for their own safety by quitting him at once. And it was, as Lorenzo says justly, 'a very notable thing, that being as they were very many in number, and belonging to all classes of society,'—as was truly the case; for several of Strozzi's confidential agents were patrician citizens, whose names still, some of them, figure among the nobility of the country—'not one man of them would leave him; the whole of them replying without one dissentient voice, that they would prefer following his fortunes,' and accepting exile and outlawry, rather than injure the house by withdrawing their services under such circumstances.

It must be owned that the testimony afforded by this incident to Strozzi's character in his relations with his subordinates is a very high one. And as far as we can realize to ourselves that character in its entirety, there does not seem to have been any part of it which, stained

by gross vices, weakness, and want of principle as it was, would have been necessarily incompatible with the qualities that make a good and popular master to those in his service. Though eager for money, and little scrupulous as to the means by which he acquired it, there are no traces of stinginess in all we know of him. Used as he was to immense incoming gains, and an equally immense expenditure, he no doubt spent his money liberally, and was quite shrewd enough to know, that with such a vast and complicated mass of affairs as his, no economy could be more short-sighted than illiberality towards those intrusted with the management of them, and no money better spent than that which went to give him the character of a good master, and attach all his immense staff of servants to him and his fortunes. His brother assures us, too, that he was especially an affable and kind man, always ready to do a service, and averse both by temperament and policy from ever making an enemy if it could be avoided. And this, too, there is no reason to doubt; for such easy-going virtues are not incompatible with those faults of deeper dye, which make it impossible for us to accord him either affection or esteem.

CHAPTER XVI.

Lorenzaccio de' Medici.—His character and reputation.—Lorenzaccio and Pope Clement.—Mutilates the ancient statues on the Arch of Constantine;—and is expelled from Rome.—Becomes the parasite of Alessandro.—The Lady Caterina Ginori.—Scoronconcolo.—The night of the 5th of January.—The murder.—Lorenzaccio's motives.—He quits the city.—At Bologna.—Reaches Venice,—and goes directly to Filippo Strozzi.

Among the followers whom Alessandro took with him to Naples, it was mentioned that there was one, Lorenzo de' Medici, a scion of the younger branch of the family, and cousin of that Cosimo who afterwards became Duke of Florence. This Lorenzo was born in 1514, and was therefore now, in 1536, twenty-two years old. He was very generally known as Lorenzino, because he was small of stature and very slender in person; and he was sometimes called Lorenzaccio, because the general estimation in which he was held by his contemporaries was not very favourable. From his boyhood he had shown himself not only an apt scholar in all the various branches of profligacy, from the contamination of which a young Florentine patrician, and above all a Medici, could hardly in that day have been expected to escape, but the slave of an inordinate and craving vanity, which made it more agreeable to him to share the low debauchery of vile and infamous parasites who would flatter him, than to live among the more aristocratic profligates who were

his equals in social position. He seems to have been endowed, as far as we can judge, with intelligence and native power of mind superior to those of the average of his fellows. But he made shipwreck on the special rock which lies in the course of men with intellects too acute to submit themselves to the restraints and teaching of systems which they perceive to rest on untenable foundations, but not large and comprehensive enough to find a higher and better law for themselves. And in a time of general moral decadence, and of removal of the old guiding, even if misguiding, landmarks, such shipwreck is of course more entire than in any other condition of society. For the social habits and modes of life which, in more favourably circumstanced times, keep men in some degree out of eccentricities of depravity, merely as a horse who has to run in a team is held to the pole, are wanting at such epochs; and each individual is thrown more on his own resources of heart and head for the finding of his path. Under these circumstances, Lorenzino became, as Varchi says, "a universal scoffer at all things human and divine, after the fashion and the school of Filippo Strozzi.' [1]

But the two men were scoffers with a difference. There was in Filippo's scoff none of that bitterness which results from a perpetually torturing consciousness of the possibility of better things, both for the scoffer and for the world around him, and from the unquenchable upbraidings of an ideal which seems to the embittered scoffer to have been rendered unattainable to him by some wicked devil's victory over vanquished virtue. Strozzi was not a 'scoffer at *all* things human and divine.' By no means; at divine things, and at such human things as stood in the way of his desires, he

[1] Varchi, Op. cit., tom. iii., p. 251.

scoffed: but Filippo Strozzi never scoffed at any amount of serious consideration as to the side on which it might eventually be found that his bread was buttered. Filippo, while things went well with him, was a happy, prosperous, cheery, pleasant-mannered gentleman, and agreeable companion. Cent. per cent. made the world a good and well-constituted world for Filippo. He was a man with troops of friends; and even those who most severely blamed his profligate vices said that it was a pity so perfect a gentleman should be specked with such blemishes.

But Lorenzaccio was never happy, cheery, prosperous, nor agreeable. He was a moody, strange, fantastic, humoursome man. 'He never laughed, but only sneered,' says Varchi; yet at times he would seem exceedingly desirous of the good opinion of his fellow-citizens, and would do or say anything to gain their good word and esteem; but he gained neither. The Florentines could make nothing of the ill-conditioned, eccentric man; so they called him Lorenzaccio,—as who should say 'that odious, good-for-nothing Lorenzo,'—and let him go to the dogs his own way.

This ill-famed and ill-lived lad—for he was such when still quite a lad—was, however, a special favourite of *one* among his countrymen, and this was no less a man than elderly Pope Clement, the vicegerent of Christ. What could have been the tie between two such persons? Varchi, who read his history aloud to Cosimo after he had become duke—to Cosimo, the cousin of the younger man and the more remote cousin of the pope also—Varchi, for his part, answers the question[1] in the simplest and most unmoved manner, and in the clearest words. Anxious as I am to tell the truth, and the whole truth, of the times of which I write, I yet *cannot* imitate his example; but

[1] Varchi, Op. cit., tom. iii., p. 251.

must content myself with referring the curious and undaunted reader to the astounding passage cited at the foot of the page,[1] and reminding him, when he has read it, to thank God that he has come into the world three hundred years later in its course. I may, however, so far quote the old historian as to mention that one result of so strange a companionship was to put into the heart of the younger man, according to his own subsequent assertion, a strong desire to slay the pontiff with his own hands.

At a somewhat later period this unfortunate young man fell under the same pope's violent displeasure, and had to leave Rome in consequence. One morning the citizens of the eternal city found that the ancient statues on the Arch of Constantine, and in other places, had been during the night deprived of their heads. The pope, in extreme anger, decreed that the author of this barbarism, be he who he might, except the Cardinal Ippolito—a curious and significant exception—should, without any form of trial, be forthwith hung. When it was found that the culprit was Lorenzaccio, the Cardinal Ippolito went to the pope, and with difficulty moderated his anger, by representing to him that Lorenzo had been actuated by 'a desire to possess these antiquities according to the custom of the ancestors of their family!' Of course a Medici was not to be hung, even though he were Lorenzaccio. He was, however, forbidden by the magistrates ever more to return to Rome; and the senator issued a proclamation that any one killing him within the city should be entitled to a reward. Moreover, Molza, the poet, made a speech against him in the Roman academy, in which he 'stabbed him through and through in Latin to the utmost of his knowledge and power,' as Varchi quaintly expresses it.

[1] Varchi, Op. cit., tom. iii., p. 253.

Thus banished from Rome, Lorenzaccio came to Florence, and speedily became an inseparable companion of the Duke Alessandro. The connection in this case seems to have been a very intelligible one. Alessandro had constant need of disreputable services of all sorts; and there was none so disreputable that Lorenzaccio was not ready to undertake it. He contrived, moreover, to open a correspondence with some of the exiles; and by showing their letters to Alessandro, persuaded him that he could be of important service to him as a spy upon their actions. He further, Varchi tells us, ingratiated himself with the duke by the singular device, curiously characteristic of the position of the duke in his good city of Florence, of feigning cowardice, and professing the utmost aversion for arms. He would neither wear them, nor willingly speak of deeds of armed violence. This humour rendered him more than ever the butt of the Florentine's ridicule and contempt, and made him appear to Alessandro in every way a safe man. He affected, too, to live much in solitude, and to despise wealth and luxury as well as the good opinion of the world—exhibiting in this respect a great contrast to his former self. Alessandro, in consequence of all this, was wont to call him the philosopher; 'but the rest of those who knew him still called him only Lorenzaccio.'

This miserable Lorenzaccio had, however, it seems, one friend, a fellow whom he had saved from the gallows by his interest with the duke, and who was known by the nickname of Scoronconcolo. This ruffian had been a murderer, and, with a profusion of gratitude, assured his patron that he was at any time ready to become so again at his slightest need. How else could a Scoronconcolo show his gratitude?

Among a great number of other services of a similar

kind, Alèssandro one day commissioned his philosophic friend to contrive the means of inveigling into his power the beautiful Caterina, the wife of Lionardo Ginori, who was, by a second marriage of Lorenzaccio's father, his own aunt. The good nephew said that the job would be a very difficult one; but that he trusted by perseverance and ingenuity to succeed. It does not seem that he ever spoke to the lady Caterina, who is described as a woman of the most spotless character, on the subject of his infamous commission. But after having amused the duke for several days by reports of his progress, he at length told him that he had induced the lady to consent to a meeting; but that, as it was necessary to use every precaution to prevent the possibility of scandal, he had arranged that it should take place in his own—Lorenzo's —house, which was very near to that inhabited by the Lady Caterina Ginori. He proposed that Alessandro should betake himself thither some time previously, having arranged so that none of his attendants should know where he was; and promised that he would then bring the lady to him there.

It was on the 5th of January, 1537, that these arrangements were made; and it was agreed that they should be put in execution that same night. Lorenzaccio had previously sounded his friend Scoronconcolo, to ascertain to what point he might be relied upon to do his patrician ally's bidding.

'There is an insolent coxcomb about the court,' he complained, assuming an air of much vexation and annoyance, 'who makes it his business to turn me into ridicule daily. His only care is to torment me on all occasions; but, by Heaven—'

'Only tell me who he is!' cried the grateful cut-throat; 'only show me the man, and then leave matters to me.

I will answer for it that he shall never give you any more trouble.'

'Nay!' returned his patron; 'that can hardly be, worse luck! For he is an especial favourite of the duke.'

'Let him be who he will, I will kill him, were he the Christ himself,' rejoined the bravo, using the phrase, says Varchi, who relates this conversation, which such ruffians always have in their mouths.

On the day above named, Lorenzaccio had the bravo to dine with him at his house, as he was frequently in the habit of doing, notwithstanding the reproaches and exhortations of his mother. When they had eaten, he said, that since Scoronconcolo was so determined to make his quarrel his own, and since he doubted not that he would be as good as his word, the time was come when, if he were still of the same mind, the deed might be done. But that he, Lorenzo, had determined to be himself present at it, and had so arranged matters that it might be done with perfect safety.

The bravo professed that he desired nothing better than to go about the work at once; and Lorenzo thereupon directed him to remain concealed in the house till he should summon him.

At the hour which had been agreed upon, Alessandro left his palace with four attendants, and went with them on foot to the Piazza di San Marco, in order that they might have no clue to the place whither he was bound. There he dismissed them all except his constant follower, L'Unghero, a ruffian of the lowest class, whom he had promoted to be his companion as well as his bravo and bully, and whose name occurs constantly in the contemporary records of all the abominations and deeds of violence in which the duke was constantly engaged. With

this man he proceeded alone to the house of Lorenzo, and leaving him on the opposite side of the street, ordered him to remain there, and to take no notice if he saw any one enter, or come out from the house opposite. This man, as it appeared afterwards, having waited a long while, and coming to the conclusion that his master was there for the night, went back to the palace, and entered Alessandro's chamber, there to wait his return.

Alessandro wore no arms except his sword. It is related, that as he was preparing to leave the palace, a shade of doubt seemed to cross his mind as he turned to take his gloves. There were mailed gloves and others of perfumed leather lying side by side. 'Which shall I take?' said he, pausing a moment; 'those fit for fighting, or these fit for love-making?' But he took the latter, and went out to his assignation.

He found Lorenzaccio waiting for him in his own bed-chamber, where there was, says the record, 'a good fire burning.' He took off his sword, and threw himself on the bed, drawing the curtains around him, either intending really to sleep, or, as Varchi says, 'to avoid the necessity of making pretty speeches to the lady he expected; for he was an extremely bad hand at anything of the sort, whereas the lady in question was noted for her conversational talents.' Meanwhile Lorenzo, in obsequiously taking from him his sword to place it at the bed-head, rapidly twisted the belt two or three times around the hilt, in such a manner that it could not readily be drawn in a moment. Then inviting the duke to repose himself, he said he would go and bring the lady from her house as had been arranged.

Going, however, instead of that in quest of Scoronconcolo, he said to him, 'Now then, brother, the time is come. My enemy is shut within my own chamber, and is asleep there.'

'All right!' returned the assassin; 'come along.'

When they had reached the landing-place of the stair before the door, Lorenzo before opening it, turned round and said, 'Remember, you are not to pay any attention to his being a friend of the duke's. You have only to give heed to your blow.'

'And that you may depend on my doing, even if it were the duke himself,' replied Scoronconcolo.

'You have exactly hit it, then!' said the other. 'It is the duke; and he cannot escape out of our hands. Come along!'

'Let's about it,' returned the bravo.

Then entering the chamber, and advancing towards the bed, Lorenzo said, 'Are you asleep, my lord?' and as he uttered the words stabbed him in the back, as he lay with his face turned the other way, with a blow that pierced his body through.

The stab was a mortal one. But the wounded man sprang from the bed, and using a stool, which he had seized, as a shield, made for the door. But he was intercepted by Scoronconcolo, who gave him a sword-cut across the temple and face, slicing off a great part of his left cheek. Lorenzaccio then seizing him, forced him down upon the bed, and throwing himself on him, gagged him with his hand to prevent his crying out sufficiently to alarm the passers in the street. As for those in the house, we are told that Lorenzaccio had, expressly in preparation for the deed he was now engaged in, so accustomed them to disturbances, scuffles, and cries of 'murder!' 'traitor!' and the like, that little attention was likely to be paid to any such sounds proceeding from his chamber.

But in stopping the duke's mouth with his hand, he put one of his fingers between the teeth, and the dying man seized it with so strong and tenacious a gripe, that

he was unable to liberate himself, and was obliged to call on Scoronconcolo to assist him. But the victim and his murderer were so closely laced together in the death struggle, that the bravo found it difficult to strike at the duke, who was undermost on the bed, so as not to injure his patron. He ran round and round the bed, says the historian, trying now on one side and now on the other, with no other result than piercing again and again the mattress on which the death-struggle was going on. 'And a strange thing it was,' says old Varchi, 'that the duke all this time, while Lorenzo was holding him down, and while he could see Scoronconcolo running round and seeking out an opening to finish him, did not once cry out nor make any entreaties, but kept a rabid hold of the finger between his teeth,' so that his murderer could not disengage himself.

At length Scoronconcolo, letting fall his sword, drew a knife that he had on him, and coming to close quarters, plunged it into the duke's throat, and continued to thrust at it,—'working it like a gimlet,' is the historian's phrase,—till he finished him. In the struggle with Lorenzo, the murderer and the victim had both rolled from the bed together on to the floor, which was by that time all a pool of blood. But when the deed was done, they lifted the body on to the bed, and drew the curtains around it.

Lorenzaccio then, 'not so much,' says Varchi, 'to ascertain whether they had been heard by any one, as to refresh and recompose himself, placed himself at the open window looking into the Via Larga; for he was spent and out of breath by reason of the hard struggle he had had.' He then bade Scoronconcolo call a boy he had in his service, named Freccia, and showed him the corpse, which the lad at once recognized, and would have cried out, had not his master stopped him. 'Why Lorenzo did this,' says Varchi,

'he never told me, nor can I of myself divine. But it seems to me, that from the time he killed Alessandro, to the hour of his own death, several years afterwards in Venice, not only did nothing ever go well with him, be the cause what it may, nor did he himself ever act in a reasonable manner.'

It would seem from this passage, that Lorenzo himself *had* told to Varchi all the other particulars of the murder; which explains satisfactorily the statement by the historian of details and words, that could only have been known to Lorenzo himself and the ruffian Scoronconcolo. That Lorenzaccio related all these things at length to Varchi, as well as to many others, we can readily believe and understand. This murder was the one episode in his life of which he was not ashamed. Long meditated and determined on—as long before, there is good reason for believing, as the time of the duke's expedition to Naples—the deed was intended by the doer of it to be the means of restoring to him the good opinion and esteem of his fellow-citizens. In all probability this was the chief, if not the sole motive of the crime. Some degree of loathing for the companion of his vices, some rebellious hatred for the master who accorded him his familiar companionship, seasoned with perpetual gibing and contemptuous toleration, as the price of infamous services, which sunk him daily yet lower in the estimation of all men, and which sufficiently explain that affectation of solitary habits which earned from his patron the jeering nickname of '*the philosopher*,'—some natural feeling of this sort may have had its part in counselling the deed. But there can be no doubt that the principal part was due to the gnawing desire of an excessively vainglorious man to lift himself out of the slough of disgrace into which he had fallen. Many men remembered afterwards strange hints and mysterious boastings which had at various times

fallen from Lorenzaccio, the butt of every one's contumely, the coward who feared to look on cold steel, the duke's pander, the black sheep, whom every witling and beardless coxcomb of the court might exercise his raillery on with safe impunity. Upon such occasions the inwardly writhing wretch would say with a scowl that the time might come when Florence would think differently of him; that it might be that his name would be remembered by the Florentines when those of his tormentors were as much forgotten as though they had never lived; that it might perhaps be seen one of these days that he dared do what hundreds of the bravest among them longed to do, and dared not. All this sort of talk, which passed at the time as the idle vapouring of a coward, and only served to add additional zest to the frequent amusement of baiting 'the Lorenzaccio,' was remembered and translated aright afterwards.

It was probably the operation of the vainglorious thirst for admiration which had led to the crime that prompted the murderer to send for his boy, that he might show him the corpse. The boy was the only person to whom he could do so with safety; and he was eager to enjoy the first-fruits of his achievement. It was something to the despised and disgraced Lorenzo to be able to let his own servant see that he was man enough to do a murder, and that on the body of the detested duke. Besides, the boy Freccia, whom he was about to take with him in his escape from the city, which he purposed to accomplish immediately, would thus be in a condition to testify to the fact that it was he, Lorenzaccio, and no other, who had struck the tyrant down, and freed Florence from the detested oppression under which all the citizens groaned, but which none but he had dared to remove.

The last words in the above-cited passage from Varchi would seem intended to insinuate a doubt of Lorenzo's perfect sanity of mind. In the estimation of the moralist and psychologist the wretched man's mind was, of course, far enough from being sound. However approximative only to the perfect '*mens sana*' may be the mental condition of the best of us, we yet reach a sufficient nearness to it to be able to know, undoubtingly, that he was very much further from the standard. But there does not appear any ground for supposing that there was in his case any such physiological deterioration as would justify us in considering the crime he committed in any degree as, in ordinary phrase, the act of a madman.

Lorenzo had taken the precaution to provide himself from 'the Bishop,' who had the superintendence of post horses (!), with an order for horses, and a permit to quit the city on the pretext of visiting his younger brother, who lay dangerously ill at the Medicean Villa of Cafoggiuolo, situated about twenty miles from Florence, on the Bologna road. He had, therefore, no difficulty in getting out of Florence, and on the road to the papal frontier immediately after the execution of the murder, taking with him the boy and Scoronconcolo, and the key of his chamber, in which he left the murdered man lying.

At Bologna he halted to get, says Varchi, that finger, the teeth-marks on which he carried to his grave with him, dressed by a surgeon; and he availed himself of the delay to go to Messer Salvestro Aldobrandini, the same who drew up the pleadings on behalf of the exiles at Naples, and who was now exercising the functions of a judge of one of the civil courts in Bologna, and recounted to him all the facts of the duke's murder. But it is a curious indication of the sort of opinion which

prevailed among the Florentines of Lorenzaccio de' Medici, that, utterly unaccountable as it would have been that any man should come posting from Florence to make such a gratuitously false and absurd statement, Messer Salvestro did not believe a word of his story; and Lorenzo continued his route to Venice, leaving him in the full persuasion that it was all a silly parcel of nonsense, invented to give himself importance for the moment.

It was on a Saturday night, the 5th of January, 1537, that Alessandro was killed; and on the following Monday night, Lorenzaccio arrived in Venice, and going straight to the house of Filippo Strozzi, rushed into his chamber; and holding up the key, cried out that within the door that that key locked, lay the corpse of Alessandro, slain by his hand.

CHAPTER XVII.

Strozzi receives the news of the death of Alessandro.—Honours shown to Lorenzo.—Blamed for not making the Duke's death known to the people.—Aldobrandini's letter to Strozzi.—Did the leaders of the exiles wish to restore liberty?—The duke's death concealed by the government of Florence.—Finding of the body.—Confusion and doubts at Florence.—Cosimo enters the city.—Is made duke.—Time fatally lost by the exiles.—Strozzi's plans for making war on Cosimo.—Strozzi's patriotic letter.—Meeting of the exiles near Bologna.—Demands on Strozzi's purse.—Doubts and hesitations.—Conduct of Piero Strozzi to his father.—Strozzi no patriot.

It was past midnight when Lorenzo reached Venice on that Monday night; and Strozzi was in his bed and asleep, when the murderer burst into his room, and made the announcement related at the end of the last chapter. As soon as he could gather his senses sufficiently to understand the rapid narrative which Lorenzaccio, spattered and mud-stained from his hard ride, and out of breath with hurry and emotion, was pouring out, his first impression, like that of Messer Salvestro Aldobrandini at Bologna, was to discredit the whole story. He disbelieved it not only because it appeared in itself exceedingly improbable, but because of the utter untrustworthiness of the man; and because it seemed not at all unlikely that it might be a scheme got up by Alessandro and his *âme damnée*, Lorenzaccio, for the express purpose of leading him and other exiles into a snare; either by

inducing them to return hurriedly to Florence, where the duke could lay hands on them, or by leading them to rush into some overt acts, which might be equally ruinous to them.

But when Lorenzo related all the details of his plot, and of the execution of it, and when he showed his very seriously wounded finger, and pointed out the marks left in it by the teeth of the dying duke in his agony, Strozzi became convinced that he was speaking the truth. He jumped from his bed, 'embraced Lorenzo; called him the Florentine Brutus,' and hailed him as the deliverer of his country.

Now, indeed, this Lorenzaccio, who had so long lived in torment under the merited contempt and aversion of his countrymen, began to reap the reward of his daring. No longer Lorenzaccio the coward, and the duke's pander; but 'Brutus, the duke's slayer, and the deliverer of his country!' All Europe was, or in a few hours would be, busied with his deed, and the consequences of it. All the plans and relations of the governments of Europe would be changed, and thrown into new combinations. All men would be talking of him, and all those immediately around him talking in high admiration. Certainly in these first days, Lorenzaccio won the stake he had played for, and enjoyed his reward. Not only the Florentine exiles throughout Europe, but the far greater part of those in the city, lauded his act to the skies, and compared him to all the heroes of patriotism known to history. Molza the poet, whose muse it would seem could 'make increment of anything,' forgot all about the terrible castigation he had administered to him on the occasion of the beheaded statues of the Arch of Constantine, and had the face to turn that very incident to account in an eulogistic epigram on his more recent

performance. 'A most beautiful epigram,' Varchi calls it. It seems anything but beautiful done into English as follows; and, to say the truth, I do not think the original, which may be found in the note,[1] is much better:—

'When Lorenzo struck the despot down;
"Shall I endure *thy* tyranny?" he cried;
"I! who scarce brooked Rome's kings of other days
To suffer standing in their marble pride!"'

But amid the praises showered upon the hero of the hour, it was asked by the exiles why, in the world he had left the city instead of remaining to direct the popular mind in the confusion which would follow the death of the duke? why at least, as Varchi says, 'since he would not remain in Florence, as he ought to have done, he had not, at least, carried the body or the head, if not out into the street, at least to the window of the room. But the fact is,' the historian goes on to say, 'that as never was there a conspiracy better plotted beforehand, or more perfectly carried into execution, so never was there one worse or more vilely mismanaged in the sequel, or which produced effects more contrary to those intended, more injurious to the authors of it, and more advantageous and profitable to their enemies.'[2]

The blame thrown upon Lorenzo for not having 'taken the body, or the head of his victim into the street, or at least placed it at the window,' requires some explanation. When the tyrant was dead, the danger to Florence was, lest it should be found that, as our classical banker phrased it a little subsequently, 'uno avulso non deficit alter.' There were, of course, a party of the traditional adherents to the Medici, of the friends of the late duke, and of the men, such as for example Guicciardini, who had made themselves so odious to the people, and to all the

[1] Note 15. [2] Varchi, Op. cit., tom. iii., p. 260.

liberal party, and had so identified themselves with the interests and principles of despotism, that it was certain they would seek to perpetuate it in some form. 'Cæsar,' too, would of course be anxious to prevent all that he had gained in Florence by so much unscrupulous evil-doing, and so much persistent toil, from being lost to him. What was necessary, therefore, above all things for securing to the interests of free government the results of the death of Alessandro, was that the people should be roused to immediate action before the friends of despotism could take measures 'for the preservation of order.' And it was with this view that it was essential that the duke's death should be at once made known to all the city.

Lorenzo excused himself, by declaring that before leaving Florence he had been to two or three houses of the leading liberals; but that he could get nobody to listen to him, or to believe him if they did—that he had commissioned his house-steward to make known the death to Giuliano Capponi and other chiefs of the popular party the first thing the following morning; and lastly, that Scoronconcolo could not be induced to remain longer in Florence, and had urged him to be off with all speed.

Strozzi, as soon as ever he became convinced of the truth of Lorenzo's story, lost no time in acting on the information. His first care was to go immediately to the French ambassadors; and having consulted with them, to write to the cardinals Ridolfi and Salviati, at Rome. He urged their immediate departure for Florence; and he, by the same post, wrote to his agent at Rome to pay ten thousand crowns to the French ambassador, for the purpose of putting in motion immediately a body of three thousand men in the French service, and starting them on their march towards Florence.

On the 8th of January, Messer Salvestro Aldobrandini, writes to Filippo from Bologna. 'I wrote yesterday to your lordship,' he says, 'of the arrival of Lorenzo de' Medici here with the news of the death of the Duke Alessandro, which in truth I did not believe till this evening, when it was confirmed by the arrival of a son of Marcantonio Marsili. And inasmuch as an opportunity, once lost does not return, I have without delay sent off Messer Agostino Fiorini to your lordship, as I have nobody else to whom I could confide the business, in order that you may let me know what steps I am to take; warning your lordship, by the same opportunity, that these are times in which we must be prompt. For men's minds, stunned by the greatness of the event, are not yet settled. I will not fail to make every attempt, giving up the office I hold here; nor will there be any want of men from these parts, despite all the prohibitions (from the papal government, that is) in the world. I have caused Martino Agrippa to write to the Count Geronimo de Coreggio, to sound him as to getting together a body of men. I will write also to Mirandola, and to all our friends in Romagna; and to-morrow I will despatch a courier to Rome to the cardinals (Ridolfi and Salviati), to learn their feelings and intentions. Your lordship must remember that this is the last act of this comedy, and that it must be played out well and quickly. And as I have the most perfect trust in your lordship's sincerity, and in the accuracy of Messer Fiorino's report, I will not write more at length; merely observing, that what he will say to you may be trusted as my view of the matter. Wherewith I kiss your hands, and congratulate you on this great news.

'Your friend and servant,

'SALVESTRO ALDOBRANDINI.'

It is observable that this active and energetic leader of the popular party looks to Strozzi for directions as to the line of conduct to be adopted under the circumstances. And all the notices of the various intrigues and attempts made by the party in the ensuing last struggle to re-establish liberty in Florence, its last stronghold in Italy, go to show that he was looked up to by the entire party as their chief and leader. The two Medicean cardinals may perhaps be excepted, as acting on their own convictions, and in some degree taking a line of their own. But they also depended much on the course adopted by Strozzi. *For the re-establishment of liberty*, I have written. And such was undoubtedly the object and hope of the great bulk of the party, and of the mass of the citizens in Florence, on whose co-operation and support they relied. But, as usual, it may be doubted how far the object of the chiefs and of the rank and file of the party were in exact accordance on this point. The reliance of the leaders of the *fuorusciti* on French support, and the intimate connection of some of them with the French king, is a suspicious circumstance in this respect. But they would doubtless have answered, that without such support any attempt at making head against 'Cæsar' was hopeless.

So curiously and instructively is the 'comedy' at which Europe is now looking on (Heaven grant it turn not to a tragedy!) a mere readaptation of that old 'comedy' of which Messer Salvestro announced the last act!

There is a letter, written the same day as the preceding, from Chiriaco Strozzi, who was then a young student in the University of Bologna, to his cousin Filippo at Venice, which is remarkable only for a significantly suspicious motto, which the young patrician has written at the top of his letter, speaking out more clearly and boldly

it is probable the ideas and wishes of his class and family connections, than the older and more cautious heads among them.

'Libertas, aut potius αριστοκρατια,' writes the classical young gentleman! 'Liberty, or rather an aristocracy, for ever!' I don't think our prudent friend Filippo would have shown this letter to many of his political friends. The contents of it are merely expressions of the writer's anxiety to be up and doing for the cause, and assurances that he would nevertheless take no step without the direction of his great kinsman. But I can fancy that the imprudent epigraph at the top of the sheet brought the unguarded young academician a rap on the knuckles from his cautious senior.

Meantime the confusion and state of doubt were extraordinary in Florence.

When, on the Sunday morning, the duke did not make his appearance, L'Unghero and his comrade, Gionio, another ruffian of the same sort, who was together with him the constant attendant and guard of Alessandro, began to suspect that all was not right. After a while they went to the Cardinal Cibo, who was at the head of the duke's government, and told him all the circumstances of the case. He became immediately much agitated; and on learning from the bishop that Lorenzaccio had obtained post-horses, and had left the city late the preceding night, 'he turned deadly pale, and felt sure of the truth.' They sent for Messer Francesco Campana, another creature of the duke, and after a short consultation, 'so great a fear fell on them that they did not dare to open Lorenzo's chamber,' and certify themselves of the fact they dreaded. 'And, in truth,' the historian goes on to say, 'being as they were without military force, and amid a most hostile population, which, although without

arms, was yet abundantly strong enough to drive them from the city with nothing but knives and stones, they had good reason to be alarmed.' They sent couriers secretly and in all haste to Pisa, to Arezzo, and into the Mugello, to bring up as quickly as possible the troops which were there; and, above all, they sent to Alessandro Vitelli, the duke's captain-general, who happened to be at Città di Castello, a town within the Roman frontier, some seventy miles from Florence. And, in the mean time, they had sand laid down, and the quintain prepared, as if Alessandro was about to amuse himself and the citizens, as he often did, with that popular game. To all who came to the palace, as was the custom on a Sunday morning, to pay their compliments to the duke, they answered, laughingly, that his excellency had been amusing himself all night, and was reposing.

Lorenzo's steward, Zeffo, had in some degree executed the commission with which his master had charged him before his departure, and had told the facts to some of the leading liberals. But he could get nobody to believe him. Or if any had a suspicion that it might be true, each man was afraid to mention it to another, or to seem to believe it, from the suspicion that it might very likely be a plot got up by the duke and Lorenzo to ascertain how the citizens were affected towards him, and so to bring them within the clutch of his vengeance. So every man, let him think what he might, quietly held his peace, and let no sign escape him that there was reason to suspect that anything in Florence was out of its usual course. A curious picture of Florentine diffidence, universal suspicion, and caution, under the influence of an irresponsible despotism!

The cardinal and the bishop then sent for Guicciardini, Francesco Vettori, and two or three others of the leading

men of the government faction, and cautiously asked their advice as to what would have to be done if the duke were longer missing. But these cautious statesmen were not to be caught napping. They too suspected a trick; and guardedly replied, that the thing to be done was to seek the duke; and that if unhappily the search were unavailing, it would then be time for further consultation.

At nightfall on the Sunday, with all possible precautions for secrecy, they proceeded to break open the door of the fatal chamber; and having there found the confirmation of their forebodings, they with great secrecy conveyed the body, wrapped in a carpet, to the neighbouring little church of San Giovannino; from whence it was afterwards removed to the sacristy of San Lorenzo, where is the Medicean burial-place. When all hope was thus ended, 'for,' says Varchi, 'up to that time they had not been altogether without hope that Alessandro might have been in hiding in some nunnery, as he sometimes was wont, they met in a garret belonging to the Cardinal Cibo, 'being in mortal fear that the people might rise and kill them all,' and decided on calling together the council the next morning; and in the mean time sent another messenger to hasten the coming of Vitelli from Città di Castello. He arrived with a hundred or so of soldiers early on the Monday morning, in much disorder and alarm, having ridden hard all night. To his surprise he found the city perfectly tranquil, and everything going on as usual. So, quietly sending his soldiers to their quarters, he began to gather together those most noted for their attachment to the Medici, and to prepare the way for continuing in some manner a despotic government.

On that same Monday morning, says Varchi, the murder of the duke began to be talked of throughout the city, and among all classes with infinite satisfaction. But

nobody ventured to speak out, and still less to take any active steps. For nobody could be found who had seen him dead; and the fear still was very general that the whole report might be a trick got up to justify new proscriptions, confiscations, and persecutions. The great piazza was studded with little rings and circles of citizens talking in low voices, and already whispering of reopening the great council, proposing names for the Gonfaloniereship, and naming those whose deeds under the late government deserved to be visited with condign punishment. To add to the confusion, says Varchi, the monks of St. Mark, and their *piagnone* disciples, began to preach, not only in the churches, but in the streets, that all this was in exact accordance with the prophecies of Savonarola; that all he had foretold would be equally fulfilled, and that Florence was about to recover her ancient liberty, to lose it no more for ever.

The council of the forty-eight was called together on that evening; but though they were all of course friends of the late government, there were, says Varchi, forty-eight different opinions among them: only in one thing were they all agreed, that the great council should not be called together. Palla Rucellai alone opposed any resolution being come to while so large a number of citizens were in exile; and insisted, acting as was supposed on behalf of Filippo Strozzi, that their return should be waited for. After a stormy meeting they separated without having come to any resolution. It was becoming hourly more urgent, however, that some measures should be decided on; for dangerous symptoms began to show themselves of the people being inclined to take the matter into their own hands. Stalwart smiths, and carpenters, and other such artisans, when they saw any citizen of note pass by their shops, would make their hammers ring

on their anvils, says Varchi, and cry out, 'Gentlemen, if you can't or don't know how to settle matters, call us! We will soon put all right.' Certainly very alarming for gentlemen who were agreed on nothing, except that they would on no account call the great council of the citizens! 'So that,' continues the historian, 'Guicciardini, who was unquestionably the chief man of the Medicean party, and others trembled for fear; and there was not one among them who did not begin to think by what means it would be possible for them to get safe out of Florence. For the gates were not only shut, but diligently guarded.

But at this conjuncture, when nothing, says Varchi, was wanting to raise all the city in tumult, save some one to be the first to move, the Signore Cosimo, the son of that redoubtable Giovanni delle Bande Nere, that John of the black bands, the only one of the Medici who was ever great in any art, save that of getting on and up in the world—the Signore Cosimo, whom we last heard of as a poor boy much neglected by his great relations, living in severe poverty with his mother, and imploring the forbearance of his creditor, the great banker Strozzi; this Signore Cosimo, now a young man of nineteen, arrived in Florence from his poverty-stricken Villa of Trebbio in the Mugello. He in his retirement had heard nothing of the duke's death, and of all the movement at Florence, till some of the friends of the family had contrived to send a secret messenger out of the city to urge his immediate coming. 'It is unspeakable and difficult to be believed,' says Varchi, with what admiration the people regarded him,' with what affection they welcomed him, and wished that he should succeed to the sovereign power. And he advanced the while with a bearing neither exulting nor cast down, and seemed by virtue of a certain genuine majesty of appearance to deserve rather than to desire

empire.' It is possible that Cosimo may have been a good-looking youth at nineteen, for the portraits and medallions which make us acquainted with his features were of several years later. And years and ill habits of life are not beautifiers. It is possible also, that very many of the Florentines may have seen in him a means of avoiding intestine disturbances, and of consolidating a reasonably free government. For they had as yet had small experience of princes, and of the seductions and demoralizing effects on them of despotic power. But withal it is not to be forgotten, that worthy old Benedetto Varchi wrote the above-cited lines with the view of reading them aloud to this same Cosimo, then in the plenitude of his power. And it is sufficiently creditable to him to have expressed under these circumstances, in as many passages of his work as he has, sentiments inspired by a love of liberty.

The following day the forty-eight again met, Cosimo was summoned by the cardinal, and asked by him if he would promise the following four things: first, to administer justice indifferently; second, not to attempt to withdraw himself from the authority of Charles V.; third, to avenge the death of Alessandro; and fourth, to treat well the late duke's natural children: all which the young man, '*who looked as if he did not desire a throne*,' very readily promised. Thereupon he was, chiefly by the influence of Guicciardini, and Vitelli, the captain-general, quietly named, 'not duke, but chief and governor of the Florentine republic.' A distinction of which of course little more was ever heard.

Palla Rucellai, indeed, still held to his previous opinion, saying that he for his part would have no more of either dukes, princes, or lords in Florence. And when Guicciardini and Vettori urged on him the danger of such resistance, observing that they were deliberating with armed

men at the door, he only said that he had lived upwards of sixty-two years, and therefore it was but little that armed men could hurt him. Some others of the forty-eight appearing still to hesitate, a voice was heard crying through the door: 'Be quick, be quick with your work, for the soldiers' (those of Vitelli, that is, who was with his men on guard outside the council chamber) 'can no longer be held in.' The hint was sufficient; the rest of the work was done quickly; and Florence had a new master.

It will readily be perceived from this account of the state of things in Florence, how important a difference might have been the result of that 'placing of the dead duke's head at the window,' which the Florentine Brutus was blamed for having neglected. Had the whole city been made aware suddenly, and while the abettors of Medicean supremacy were altogether unprepared, of the certainty of the duke's death, there would probably have been such a demand on the part of the people for the immediate convocation of the great council as could not have been resisted, and the whole issue might have been very different.

Time was also fatally lost by the '*fuorusciti*,' through an error of the Cardinals Salviati and Ridolfi. It has been seen that Filippo Strozzi's first care was to write to them, urging them to collect forces to march on Florence, and providing funds to enable them to do so. He started himself for Bologna, well furnished with money on the 11th,[1] and found there letters from the two cardinals, written by them on hearing of the duke's death, before the receipt of his from Venice. They on their part exhorted him to levy men in the neighbourhood of Bologna, and advance with them on Florence, promising that they would do the same from the side of the upper Valdarno.

[1] January, 1537.

It is clear, therefore, that their plans and intentions were perfectly in accord. Filippo, working together with Aldobrandini, and with plenty of money in his hand, found it easy enough to raise men; but had much difficulty in hitting on a place at which they could be mustered. For the neutrality of the pope forbade this being done on his territory. After a while, however, a spot called Castiglione de' Gatti—Cat's Castle, as we should say—situated in the Apennines, not far from the celebrated monastery of Lavernia, was fixed on. This belonged to Count Girolamo Pepoli, and was subject to no superior jurisdiction. The count's permission was obtained by Strozzi to assemble his men there; but at the price of giving the count the command of them, though he was not well adapted, says Lorenzo Strozzi, for the position. Filippo paid down two thousand crowns for two thousand men to be at Castiglione de' Gatti on the 25th, undertaking that the remainder of their hire should be paid there on that day.

But just as he had succeeded in making these arrangements, came letters from the two cardinals, telling him that they had been met on their way from Rome by a messenger from the new government at Florence, praying them to come to the city in a friendly spirit, and promising that everything should be arranged to their satisfaction. They had therefore countermanded all their military preparations, were going on to Florence as friends to the existing government, and counselled him to do likewise; or at all events to take no hostile steps till he should hear further from them. Filippo was much perplexed on receiving these tidings, and was very doubtful what course to take.[1] Being extremely unwilling to act in opposition to the cardinals, and feeling, moreover, that he was not

[1] Vita di Filippo Strozzi, p. xcvii.

strong enough to commence hostilities alone against the forces at the disposition of Cosimo and his friends, he determined to take no further steps for the present, and to submit, as his brother remarks, to the loss of the two thousand crowns he had advanced.

But there is a letter extant from him to the cardinals, written before the receipt of the news of this change in their plans, some passages of which indicate that Strozzi was not very sanguine as to the result of the struggle he was about to embark in.

After pointing out that the fate of the city was altogether in the hands of Vitelli, and suggesting that it might be possible to bribe him to refrain from lending his hand to the establishment of a despotic government, by giving him the territory of Borgo San Sepolcro, a little city at the foot of the Apennine, about twenty miles from Arezzo, he goes on to say:—

'If we come to a trial of strength, seeing that they are in the city, and we are out, that they have to pay their way with the public money, and we with that of private individuals' (and on this point the banker might well speak feelingly, for the funds for making war against Cosimo's government must, as he well knew, come nearly if not quite all from his own purse); 'seeing further that the imperial assistance on which they may rely is near at hand, while the French support which we may hope for is far off, it seems to me that we have no very cheering prospects. For these reasons I am not eager for the enterprise, and fear that the achievement of our Brutus may turn out to have been fruitless, even as was that of the other Brutus. For did not Augustus reign in the place of Cæsar? Everything is in the power of Signor Alessandro Vitelli. And as he has on this occasion taken the line of protecting Cosimo, and as Cæsar may set his

matters all straight by marrying the new duke to the widow (Margarita, the widow of Alessandro), I think that Vitelli will stand firm by him. If, indeed, it were true, as Lorenzo de' Medici affirms, that the late duke quite recently told him, that he had not more than ten thousand crowns of ready money in his coffers, I should in that case be inclined to think that we had no such very bad game before us; for it would be impossible to maintain garrisons long in the necessary places with so small a command of money. But if they have greater abundance of cash, or if Signore Alessandro Vitelli is willing to spend money of his own, holding in his hands, as he does, the fortresses and the ducal jewels as a pledge, in that case I should have a different opinion.'

Strozzi was, nevertheless, ready to try the fortune of war, and to supply the sinews of it, as is clear from the following subsequent passage from the same letter:—

'Knowing the Count Girolamo Pepoli's good disposition to the cause, and his devotion to your lordships, especially to Salviati, I have given him the command and government of the three thousand men, who are ready to march hence. On the 25th of this month they will be all landed at Castiglione de' Pepoli (otherwise Castiglione de' Gatti), a spot near the frontier, where they may descend into the Mugello,[1] or otherwise, as may seem good to your lordships. And I hope that you will let me have your directions in that respect before that day; as we shall be in a region whence want of provisions will soon drive us; and besides, wasting time and consuming pay will not at all suit us, who have to carry on the war out of our private purses. If I receive no directions from your lordships, we shall proceed according to the judg-

[1] A district so called, lying between Prato and the foot of the Apennines.

ment of Signor Girolamo Pepoli; for I understand nothing of war. Brutus will be there in person, and Aldobrandini also.'

There is a very perceptible sneer in this mention of the 'Brutus,' whose act had put in motion all this activity, which is worth a whole volume of commentary on the estimate in which Lorenzaccio was held by his contemporaries.

The two cardinals almost immediately after the receipt of the letter above quoted, changed their minds and their plans, as has been seen. But they were very shortly enlightened as to the great mistake they had made in giving such ready credence to the flattering advances of the new government. No sooner had they disbanded the forces they had collected, and caused Filippo by their representations to do the same, than the tone of the men in power at Florence, and especially of Alessandro Vitelli, who was now all-powerful there, was entirely changed towards them; and they were given to understand that their presence in Florence was by no means acceptable. Hereupon they hurried off to renew consultations with Filippo. And he and they, with Messer Salvestro Aldobrandini, and other of the leaders of the 'fuorusciti,' had a meeting near Bologna.

Meantime Francesco Vettori, Strozzi's old correspondent, was writing letters, which are still extant, to Strozzi, urging him to abstain from causing bloodshed and confusion in his native city, by endeavouring to upset the present state of things by force of arms. And there is a long letter from Strozzi in reply, dated Bologna, 20th of January, 1537, on which Signor Bigazzi, who prints it among those illustrations to Niccolini's Tragedy, to which these pages have been so largely indebted, remarks, that it is 'the most beautiful, if not the most important

among the letters we have of Filippo Strozzi; and proves that the dignity of his mind was never altogether destroyed by his own vices and the corruptions of the time.' And in truth the letter is full of fine sentiments; and is admirably written in the tone of a noble-minded man, unjustly suspected of conduct utterly repugnant to his feelings. But Joseph Surface's speeches are 'beautiful' in exactly the same sort. Yet they are not held to prove his dignity of mind. Strozzi complains in a tone of the most noble, injured innocence, that his correspondents suspect him of what his whole life should prove him incapable. He professes his readiness to accept the government of Cosimo, for whose father he had always the greatest respect; and as for Alessandro Vitelli, has he not always asserted that Vitelli saved his life in that matter of the accusation of poisoning Alessandro, by his expedient of appealing to Rome, before seizing him?

But we cannot admit that all this proves anything, except that the writer knew perfectly well how the part of a patriotic citizen should be acted, and was quite equal to assuming it at the shortest notice, and under the most unfavourable circumstances; even when he was at the very moment busy in concerting a diametrically different line of conduct. We have seen what he was writing to the Cardinals Salviati and Ridolfi a day or two before. The letter to them is without date. But he speaks in it of the 15th of January as a day past, and of the 25th as a future day. While the letter, full of protestations that he was incapable of moving war against the city, bears date the 20th.

And it now remains to be seen whether his subsequent conduct was more consistent with the sentiments expressed in this 'beautiful' epistle.

At the meeting held, as has been said, near Bologna,

those who were the most eager for war urged the reliance that might be placed on assistance from France. And a letter had been received from the Cardinal de Tournon, Francis I.'s minister, requesting Filippo to advance twenty thousand crowns on the security of his—the cardinal's—word, and to pay them over to the French ambassadors in Venice, to be used for making war on Florence. But Filippo, says his brother, rather naïvely, was not of this opinion. He alleged that the fine opportunity which the death of Alessandro had opened had been lost by the unfortunate credulity of the cardinals; that troops from various sources were already collected in Tuscany, or were ready to march thither; and that under these circumstances it did not appear to him opportune to attempt anything. He added further, that he had a few months before lent the Cardinal de Tournon fifteen thousand crowns, which had not been repaid, and that it really seemed as if it were expected that he should support the entire expenses of the war. While they were still debating, another envoy from Francis I. arrived with letters for Filippo from the king. He also brought with him fifteen thousand crowns, which, together with the twenty thousand proposed to be borrowed from Strozzi, would make up the king's contribution to the war; while it was expected, said the French envoys, that the exiles would bring forward as much on their part. But as the only exiles who could advance anything were Strozzi himself and the two cardinals, this portion also would fall chiefly upon him. So that in point of fact the whole of the French share came out of his pocket, seeing that even the fifteen thousand crowns sent had been previously borrowed of him; and at least a third, if not more, of the other half.

It did seem certainly very like getting up a dance,

in which the great banker's part was to pay the piper. Filippo hung back; advanced all sorts of objections, and was no little abused by the more ardent among the exiles, who, as Strozzi justly observed, risked in the matter nothing but their persons To make matters worse for him, and put him in a still more painful position, his son Piero arrived, with a couple of hundred soldiers in the French pay at his back, coming out of Piedmont. Piero had been flattered and caressed in France by Francis and by his kinswoman, Catherine, now become Dauphiness by the death of her husband's elder brother, till he was wholly in the French interests. He was more eager for the war than any of them; and abused his father in the presence of the Cardinal Salviati and the French ambassador, for not coming down at once with his money, in the most violent and disgraceful manner.[1] He told Filippo never again to dare to call him his son, for it was impossible that he could be the offspring of so vile a wretch. With that the young scapegrace stalked off; and, says Varchi, his father followed in much affliction, and with great difficulty obtained from his son, by the intercession of Varchi himself, who afterwards told the story to posterity, leave to be heard by him, that he might justify himself.

Poor Filippo! It must be admitted that his position was a hard one; and we can hardly find it in our hearts not to pity him. But this was what his prudence and policy, unguided by any principle save that of so steering amid the rocks and shoals of his difficult course as ever to fill the sails of his own interests, had brought him to. The cry of those who were insisting on the war, and of his own son above all, was that patriotism, and the deliverance of their country, demanded it. And it may

[1] Varchi, op. cit. tom. iii. p. 324. Vita di Filippo Strozzi, p. cii.

be believed that many among the exiles were sincere in their cry. As for the two cardinals, nephews of Leo X., their feelings were in all probability much akin to those of Clarice, when she so soundly rated Ippolito and Alessandro, and drove them forth out of the Palazzo Medici, and out of Florence, as illegitimate pretenders to the heritage of the Medicean name, honours, and ascendency. Those very reverend and legitimate scions of the stock of Cosmo, 'Pater patriæ,' and Lorenzo the Magnificent saw with jealous eyes, first the bastard Alessandro, and then Cosimo the representative of a younger branch, stepping into the heritage of a crown prepared for the Medicean race by the long toils and unscrupulous crimes of so many generations of their ancestors. But as for *liberty*, it may well be supposed that their aspirations would, at the most, have shaped themselves into the phrase of the young Strozzi, the Bolognese student: "Liberty, or rather an aristocracy, for ever!'

But Filippo Strozzi cannot be credited either with patriotically enduring the government which his ill-judging fellow-citizens had placed over them for the sake of sparing them the miseries of war, confusion, and anarchy—for we have seen him busily engaged in plotting and preparing such warfare; nor with patriotically striving at all hazards to destroy that tyranny and restore his country to freedom; for, besides the damning evidence of that imprudent epigraph to his young kinsman's letter, he based all his schemes on French support; and he at least knew well how just was the observation we find in one of Vettori's letters addressed to him, urging him not to have recourse to armed rebellion; to the effect that every advantage secured to French influence had but the effect of subjecting Florence the more fatally to the foreigner, and in the first place causing the imperial

arm to weigh the more heavily on the city. Loudly as Strozzi talked of his patriotic devotion, and liberally as he expended his immense wealth for political purposes, we are obliged to come to the conclusion that no trace of real patriotism is to be found in his conduct from beginning to end.

In the calculated and 'prudent' marriage at twenty years old, which assured him the connection that enriched him with all the pickings of Medicean corruption; in the dexterous and cowardly trimming at the time of the Medicean reverses in 1527; in the still more 'prudent,' and still less creditable withdrawal of himself from all participation in the really patriotic and fateful struggle of 1529-30; in the yet more infamous readiness to become the successful tyrant's instrument in all the worst and most ignoble work of the establishment of a crushing and degrading despotism; in the even lower depths of abomination reached by him in the vile and vain endeavour to curry favour with the wretched Alessandro, by making his mature age the pander to all the grossest profligacy, and the tutor in all the worst vices of the youthful tyrant; in his readiness at first, as well as in his subsequent hesitation, to pay the cost of an armed resistance to that tyrant's successor; and finally, in the determination to do so, which brought him to his miserable death, and which will form the brief sequel that remains to be told of his story: in all the varied stages of his active, trimming, tacking, laborious, eventful life, we are unable to discover any leading motive, any pole-star which guided his devious course, save that of his own interests, understood in the most narrow sense, and pursued with the most untiring tenacity.

And yet Filippo Strozzi had an intellect worthy of better things; and in some respects even a heart worthy

of better things. The keen, unscrupulous, pursuit of wealth was in no degree allied in him to any of the miser's weakness and meanness. The great capitalist cannot justly be accused of avarice in its exactest sense. He wanted to be great, admired, brilliant, beloved even. And the ideas of the world around him, from which he had formed his theory of life, suggested no other conception of the means of becoming all this than those which he so sedulously pursued.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Piero Strozzi.—His conduct, and motives.—Filippo decides on war.—Obstacle to it on the part of the French general.—Expedition to Monte Murlo.—News of this movement in Florence.—Piero's march against Prato.—Vitelli's night march from Florence to attack Monte Murlo.—Filippo and other exiles captured;—taken to Florence.—their interview with Cosimo.—Execution of most of the prisoners.—Filippo prisoner in the fortress of Florence.—He is the prisoner of Charles V.—Intercessions made with the emperor in his favour,—by Vittoria Colonna,—by Catherine de' Medici,—by Paul III.—Filippo is examined by torture.—Capture and examination of Giuliano de' Gondi.—Filippo given up to Duke Cosimo.—His literary occupations in prison.—His death.—Doubts, and different accounts respecting it.—Paper said to be left by him,—probably a forgery.—Epitaph written by himself.—His personal appearance, and habits of life.—Conclusion.

PIERO STROZZI's conduct in this matter of the war to be waged against the new government of Florence was yet more clearly and avowedly unpatriotic than that of his father. He had chosen the profession of arms, which as it then existed in Italy, where every leader of repute held himself ready to sell his sword and his allegiance to the best bidder, was not only destructive of all national and patriotic feeling in the individual adopting such a career, but was eminently injurious to the general tone of feeling prevailing on all subjects connected with the duties of a citizen to his country. Piero Strozzi hoped to carve his way to honours and eminence by selling him-

self and his sword to France, and identifying himself entirely with French interests and aims. He pursued this end with consistency, pertinacity, and bravery, and accordingly succeeded in attaining it. But it was a low ambition for one of the first citizens of a state which had hitherto marched in the van of European civilization, and which there might yet have been hopes of saving from the sad impending fate that was to thrust her to the very bottom of the scale. A very low and immoral ambition, which fifty years earlier in Florence would have been felt to be such by any Florentine in Piero Strozzi's place. And the ominous fact that it was not still so felt, was a very significative symptom that the degradation which absolutism, and the social ideas it brings with it, were already beginning to work their fatal effects.

Piero, at this beginning of his career, saw only in the question whether or no the exiles from Florence should raise war against Cosimo, who was protected by Charles V., an opportunity of making himself useful to French interests, and more immediately of finding the means of supporting the body of troops he had got together under his standard, and who formed the stock in trade of a *condottiere* captain starting in life. To keep these together, and maintain them, was just then an object of prime importance, and at the same time of the greatest difficulty to Piero. He had no means at his disposal, and his father, when the son asked for money for this purpose, liberal as he was in general, answered that the maintenance of soldiers was the business of monarchs and sovereign states, and not of private citizens.[1] It will be remembered that it was a matter of great displeasure to Filippo when his son first engaged himself with Francis I. It was the pressing necessity to find some means of

[1] Vita di Filippo Strozzi, p. ciii.

supporting these troops that made Piero Strozzi so exceedingly anxious for the war, and provoked him into the scandalous and disgraceful conduct to his father that has been related. He had also contracted a large amount of debt, which his father would not pay; although we find, in a curious paper[1] left by Filippo, and headed, 'My extraordinary expenses from 1526 to the present time, as far as I can recollect; for many, I am sure, I cannot remember,'[2] the following notable entry. 'Piero has debts to the amount of about five thousand crowns, which, inasmuch as they are owing to gentlemen and soldiers, must sooner or later be paid.' Nice morality! and that in the mouth of a trader and banker!

The upshot of the opportunity of defending himself, which Piero Strozzi was persuaded graciously to allow his father, and of the ill-will among the exiles generally, which the banker found himself incurring in consequence of his demurring to defray the costs of the proposed war, was, that he ended by consenting to advance all the large sums demanded of him, both as loans to France, and as his share of the moiety to be contributed by the exiles.

But when this had been arranged, a fresh obstacle arose to the prosecution of the war, which none of the parties had calculated upon. Gianpaolo Orsini da Ceri, then at Rome, who was the captain in the service of France, to whom the command of the expedition was to be intrusted, notwithstanding the urgent representations of the French ambassadors in Venice, objected to undertake the enterprise, giving it as his opinion, as a military authority, that no good was to be hoped from it. He said, indeed, that if the Cardinal de Macon would, as the representative of Francis in Rome, give orders for him to

[1] See note 16.

[2] Printed at p. 337 of the illustrations to the Tragedy by Niccolini.

march, he would, as was his duty as a soldier, obey. But the cardinal shrank from assuming such a responsibility. And the result was, that nothing was done towards carrying out the object for which Filippo had paid his money till several months later.

It was near the end of July[1] before the promised French assistance was forthcoming to support the exiles in the meditated attempt on Florence. By that time four thousand infantry and three hundred cavalry had been assembled at Mirandola, under the command of Capino da Mantova, who was placed under the orders of Bernardo Salviati and Piero Strozzi; and by the assistance of Count Pepoli, and in some degree of Pope Paul III., who chose to see nothing of the movements of the *fuorusciti* on his professedly neutral territory, a force was collected by the exiles in the neighbourhood of Bologna, to co-operate with them.

Filippo left Venice when all was ready for the attempt, with the intention of remaining at Bologna till the success of the enterprise should open the way for him to Florence. But there was then at Bologna a certain[2] Niccolaio Bracciolini, of Pistoia, with whom Filippo had formerly been on terms of much intimacy. This man, who appears to have been in the pay, or at least in the interest, of the Florentine government, persuaded Filippo Strozzi, and Baccio Valori, one of the chiefs of the exiles, who held the position of commissary of the rebel forces, by representations that he could throw Pistoia entirely into their hands, to come on with some twenty horseman in advance of the army towards that city. It would be the means, he said, of confirming and assuring the minds of the numerous friends to the cause in those districts, if they appeared among them before the troops of Cosimo, and the Impe-

[1] 1537. [2] Segni, op. cit. vol. ii. p. 173.

rialists, who supported him, should have shown themselves. Induced by these representations, and by his confidence in Bracciolini, Filippo, with Baccio Valori, advanced to a castle called Monte Murlo, in the neighbourhood of Prato.

It is a remarkable spot, which must attract the attention of any traveller between Prato and Pistoia. The castle, now merely a lone farm-house, crowns an isolated conical hill, which stands out in front of the chain of the higher Apennine range, about seven miles from Pistoia, three from Prato, and fifteen only from Florence. This advance into the territory of the enemy, unsupported by the rebel army, which, though commanded to follow, was eventually detained two days by heavy rains in the mountains, seems to have been as mad a piece of imprudence as ever any man was guilty of. The *castle* of Monte Murlo, as it was called, was not a place capable of any defence against a serious attack, even if those who accompanied Filippo had been numerous enough to defend it. Segni, the historian, says, that Strozzi was misled as to the nature of the place; that he supposed it to have been an efficiently fortified stronghold; and that on reaching it, though Baccio Valori, and those with him boasted that they were sufficient to hold it against any force likely to come from Florence against them, he immediately felt the great risk of the step he had been led to take, and sent off messengers to his son Piero to hasten up with his troop with all possible expedition.

In the mean time the traitor Bracciolini had kept Cosimo and his captain-general, Vitelli, well informed of every movement of Filippo Strozzi and the exiles. Indeed, the advance of the latter to Monte Murlo was generally known in Florence. And the universal idea among the citizens was, that it was wholly incredible that any of the exiles, and above all such a man as Filippo Strozzi, would have

ventured on such a step, if he had not some grounds for confidence beyond what were apparent. Vitelli knew well enough from Bracciolini the real truth, and the pretences by which Filippo had been induced to make this fatally imprudent move. But he chose to affect to share the alarm which prevailed in the city; an alarm which significatively suggests to us the usual nature of these returns of an exiled party. Many, probably the great body of those who remained in Florence, would have rejoiced in the overthrow of despotic power, and the restoration of the old constitution. But they nevertheless dreaded the immediate results of the victorious entry of a persecuted and vindictive party. Once again it was a manifestation of the old 'Væ victis!' principle, which separated the inhabitants of each city into two irreconcilably hostile factions, and thus made despotism possible.

Vitelli took every measure calculated to raise the panic to the utmost; and in the mean time quietly sent Bertino Strozzi, some cousin of the great family, who was ready to curry favour with the existing government by betraying the head of his house, to Monte Murlo, on the pretext of a friendly visit to Filippo, that he might report accurately the degree of defence which the exiles were likely to make, and ascertain whether they were in any degree on their guard. His report was to the effect that Filippo and Baccio Valori were living in the old castle, as if they were in their own villa in time of peace, and that the place might very easily be taken.

In the mean time Piero Strozzi had arrived in the neighbourhood of Monte Murlo, with six hundred infantry and a hundred horsemen. But instead of remaining to guard the castle, he had pushed on to the walls of Prato, where he had engaged in a useless skirmish with the governor and the garrison of that city.

Vitelli was at the same time taking his measures for an attack on Monte Murlo. He left Florence with a force of three thousand well-armed men soon after night-fall on the last day of July; while the leading citizens who were in Florence passed the night with their feet in their stirrups ready to mount, says Segni, and ride for their lives, in case Vitelli should fail in his enterprise. 'And Francesco Vettori, among the rest, though he was a great friend of Filippo, cried out that every effort must be made to defend the city; for that there would be no mercy shown; and Filippo, in returning to the city, would have no power to save it'[1] from the fury of the general body of the exiles and their soldiery.

Piero Strozzi, on returning from his silly march against Prato, had left the main body of his troops at a villa at the foot of Monte Murlo, while he himself had, with a few men, gone towards Pistoia to raise the country in that direction. He had but just started on this errand when Vitelli and his little army arrived below Monte Murlo, about an hour before the dawn of the 1st of August. Falling in with the body left by Piero Strozzi, they attacked and easily routed them. Piero, either hearing the noise of the attack, or warned by a scout of what was occurring, returned to find his men escaping to the hills in all directions; and at once giving up all for lost, disguised himself, and with much difficulty, by favour of the darkness, for it was not yet dawn, escaped across the mountains.

The victors then proceeded to climb the steep hill on which the castle is situated; to seize the important prize which was caged in it as in a trap. There were Filippo Strozzi, Baccio Valori, with a son and a nephew, Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, the same whom we saw at the beginning of this history making himself conspicuous as a

[1] Segni, op. cit. tom. ii. p. 175.

favourer of the Medici, when they returned to the city in 1512, now a rebel taken in arms against them; and ten or twelve young Florentines as a garrison. They had three old howitzers on the walls, and a half-ruined bastion to protect the entrance; but so little were they dreaming of an attack, that Filippo and Valori were in their beds asleep when they were roused by the trumpets of the enemy before the gate. Filippo and Baccio at first screamed for their horses; but a minute's outlook from the window of the room where they had been sleeping showed them that all hope of escape was vain. They were caught in the trap that had been baited for them; and with their capture the enterprise of the *fuorusciti* was at an end. Without Filippo, who held the purse, nothing was to be done.

Seeing that the game was up, Filippo called from the window to his party to yield, and cried out again and again that he surrendered to Alessandro Vitelli, in whom he hoped to find a friend. Vitelli met him with all courtesy, addressing him as an old friend, and assured him that he need be in no fear for his life.

The prisoners were then mounted on the most wretched horses that could be found; both, says Segni, for the greater security and the greater contumely, and so brought to Florence.

Down that same Via Larga, along which Filippo had escorted the young Medici prisoners in the expulsion from the city in 1527, amid a closely-crowded rabble of those who are always ready to pay themselves for their cringing to the great by exulting over them when they fall, and under the scorching heat of the August sun, the prisoners had to pass to the Palazzo Medici to be presented to the victor Cosimo.

A miserable thing it was, says Segni, to see these noble citizens, and especially Filippo Strozzi, who had for

so many years passed for the greatest and most fortunate private citizen in all Italy, dismounting from their vile hacks, in soiled and coarse dresses, at the door of the Medicean tyrant.

Passing up the magnificent stair of the palace, amid a throng of the jeering parasites of the new ruler, they reached the presence-chamber, and *knelt* before the youthful despot, who had their lives in his hand, and humbly besought his clemency. Cosimo's mother also was present, that Maria Salviati, who ten years before was writing in such pitifully humble guise to beg the forbearance of her creditor, Filippo Strozzi, and to her Filippo also knelt beseechingly. Cosimo 'answered a few words,' says Segni, 'with a very tranquil countenance expressive of mildness and benignity rather than of hatred and cruelty.' So that the prisoners went from his presence with good hope in their hearts.

But the nature of that ancestor of the long line of Medicean dukes, who afterwards earned for himself the appellation of the Tuscan Tiberius, was not yet known. A few years later no man would have thought of expecting mercy from him. On leaving the palace, Filippo and Baccio Valori were taken to the fortress, and consigned to the keeping of Alessandro Vitelli. The rest of the prisoners were sent to the Bargello, or common jail. Many citizens also were arrested, as known friends and adherents of Filippo Strozzi, and some were committed to the Bargello; but a great many, says Segni, were allowed to escape by the Spanish soldiers,[1] who would not stain their military honour by making themselves ministers to the hangman.

On the following day, the 2nd of August, a scaffold

1 Troops in the pay of the emperor, marched to Florence to support Cosimo.

was erected on the great Piazza, and four of the prisoners were decapitated. On the following day four more were brought out to death. But when this had continued for four days, the murmuring of the city at so ghastly a daily sight became so loud that it was deemed prudent by the new despot to stay his hand. And the remainder of the rank and file of the prisoners were sent to the fortress of Pisa, where in one way or another they shortly died.

But it was not till the 20th of that month of August that Baccio Valori, and Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi were, after being first duly stretched on the rack, beheaded privately in the chapel of the Bargello.

Filippo still remained a prisoner in that fortress for the building of which he had furnished the funds. But Vitelli, while he took very good precautions to prevent the possibility of his escape, made his imprisonment as little irksome to him as might be, allowing him the free range of the interior of the fortress, permitting him to see such visitors and friends as chose to come to him, and inviting him to live at his own table. He treated him so well, indeed, that the jealousy of the suspicious tyrant Cosimo was excited by it. But the captain-general seems to have acted on principles which his master could not have but approved. For we are told that by this means he got out of his prisoner 'very large sums of money, besides jewels and presents of great value, made by Filippo to Madonna Angiola, his wife, and to his sons and daughters.'

Very shortly, however, after the commencement of Filippo's imprisonment, Vitelli left Florence and the service of Cosimo to enter that of Pope Paul III., and delivered over the fortress, together with his prisoner, to Don Giovanni di Luna, an officer of Charles V. Both Cosimo and Filippo considered themselves shamefully ill

treated by Vitelli in this matter;—the duke, because the fortress, and still more the prisoner, whom he was exceedingly anxious to have in his own hands, were given into the keeping of the emperor, and Strozzi, because all the money which he had given to Vitelli, and all the promises which the latter had made to him that his life should be spared, were now useless and worthless.

Filippo was now, therefore, the prisoner of Charles V., and not of Cosimo; and it was to the emperor, therefore, that were addressed the numerous intercessions of those to whom it seemed a strange, and terrible calamity that so very rich a man should suffer the common fate of his fellow-rebels and conspirators. These intercessors with Charles were numerous and influential; and the mass of papers still extant concerning the various intrigues and schemes set on foot with the hope of saving him, indicate that the fate of the great capitalist was looked on as a matter of almost European importance.

Among many others, the celebrated Vittoria Colonna interested herself in his favour: and we have a letter from her to the Marchese del Vasto, written from Ferrara, in which she begs him to use all his influence with the emperor, remarking that 'Filippo Strozzi once lent me certain moneys; and although they were repaid very shortly, still my obligation for his kindness remains.' She feels compassion, she says, for the error, in some degree excused perhaps by the longing desire of revisiting one's native land.

Bernardo Tasso, the poet, and father of the greater poet, was employed by Strozzi as a salaried agent at the court of the emperor at Madrid, to put in motion every influence that could be brought to bear in his favour.

Catherine de' Medici, the Dauphiness of France, his kinswoman, was also applied to; and did not, as it would

seem, refuse to make application to her father-in-law's enemy; very possibly thus injuring the cause she intended to serve.

But the most powerful, and, as it seems from the records of these negotiations, the most earnest of all these intercessors was Pope Paul III. Not only by letter, but by word of mouth at the meeting which he had with Charles V. and Francis I. at Nice, he strongly urged the emperor to spare his prisoner. But it is curious to observe the profound and universal immorality of the time, even in its thoughts of mercy. On what ground are we to picture to ourselves this venerable octogenarian pontiff urging the most Catholic emperor to mete out to Strozzi a different measure from that which had been allotted to his fellow-captives? Did he speak of his especial worth? But he was notoriously one of the most profligate men of his age. Did he urge at least his devotion to the church, and the utility with which he might serve the cause of religion? But he was equally notoriously a scoffer and freethinker. There was absolutely nothing to put forward but his colossal wealth. What! put to death a man with millions of money at command! Will it not be an impious flying in the face of Mammon? Or (if we are to trust the anonymous concluder of Lorenzo Strozzi's biography of his brother, which ceases at the beginning of the Monte Murlo affair), as Paul would have put it if he had honestly spoken out his thoughts, 'What! kill the goose, who lays us such golden eggs! kill our loan contractor, and tax-farmer, who does all our little bills, and can always be depended on for help at a pinch!' For the writer referred to remarks, not as any matter of reproach or complaint, that Paul had in mind money assistance which he had received, and the hope of receiving more from the great banker. It is notable too, that in all the

applications for Strozzi's pardon, and in all the reasons adduced on the other side for not granting it, no word is said by either party of the necessity of meting *equal* justice to all. Nobody attempts to show that his case differed in any way from that of those who had been summarily executed. And nobody remarks that—as it would be phrased in these days—if he were pardoned, the others were murdered men. No idea of the kind seems to have crossed the mind of any of the parties concerned for an instant.

Pope Paul succeeded in obtaining from Charles a promise that Strozzi's life should be spared if it should appear that he was not implicated in the murder of Alessandro; which there is not the slightest reason for suspecting that he was. But there are grounds for thinking that Filippo's cause was injured in the mind of the saturnine and suspicious Charles by the strong interest taken in it by so many and so great personages. And Cosimo was all the while labouring hard with the emperor for permission to wreak his vengeance on the great citizen, who had disputed his sovereignty. But still Charles answered, that he would consent to his death only in case he were found guilty of having been Lorenzo's accomplice in the murder of Alessandro. At the same time the emperor consented, that *for the ends of justice*, Cosimo should cause Strozzi to be *examined* on this point. The emperor and Cosimo, it may be concluded perfectly well understood each other; and the sequel proceeded in the most orderly and regular manner.

An 'examiner,' one Sebastiano Bindi, a 'chancellor of the Eight,'[1] was sent to Filippo, and on his denying all participation in the crime charged against him, forthwith placed him on the rack, and kept him there in the most frightful agony, till Don Giovanni di Luna, whose office,

[1] A board of the executive so called.

as commandant of the fortress, required him to be present, exclaimed that the torture was too great. The zealous chancellor, however, could not succeed in drawing the desired confession from the victim. But the matter still proceeded according to the usual precedent. After a while spent in looking about for the most proper person for the purpose, 'justice' laid hands on an unfortunate man of the name of Giuliano Gondi, apparently for no other reason than that he was an intimate friend of Strozzi, and had passed much time with him in his prison. He was secretly seized by night, and was no more seen or heard of; till, many years afterwards, when Cosimo was at the height of his power, he was liberated from prison, and reappeared among the citizens. But he ever after maintained the most complete silence on all that had taken place during his imprisonment. And nothing was therefore ever known beyond the fact that a deposition said to have been obtained from him while on the wheel, was sent to the emperor; and that an answer was received from Madrid, in consequence of which Filippo was delivered into the hands of Cosimo.

Nearly sixteen weary months of heart-sickening alternations of hope and despair had passed over Filippo Strozzi, in that fortress which his money had built for the oppression of his fellow-citizens, while the rulers of Europe were thus settling his fate. For the greater portion of that time, however, he had been buoyed up by considerable hopes of eventual pardon and liberty. And during the tedious hours of this long imprisonment he occupied himself in making a translation of Polybius into Tuscan, which he sent with a dedicatory letter, bearing date the 20th of September, 1538, to Alessandro Vitelli. 'A magnificent letter!' Signor Bigazzi says. And in truth it indicates a very competent appreciation of the value of

the author, and of the circumstances under which his work was written. It is, together with four or five other letters from Strozzi to Piero Vettori, written while he was engaged on the translation, and filled with critical remarks and inquiries on passages of the Greek text, a sufficient testimony that neither the political affairs of one of the busiest politicians in Europe, nor the business of the largest of European capitalists, nor the pleasures of one of the most dissipated men living, had sufficed to occupy all the energies of this remarkable man's most versatile mind; and that amid all his strangely varied cares, anxieties, debaucheries, intrigues, conspiracies, and troubles, he had found the time and the inclination to recur to those pursuits which he had first been taught to love by the scholars of the magnificent Lorenzo's scattered academy. But on this 'magnificent letter,' too, there is the trail of the serpent. And the reader of it who is seeking for materials to form his judgment of Filippo Strozzi, will be more impressed by the abject flattery it addresses to Vitelli, when we know how bitter the feelings of the writer's heart were, and that justly, against him, than by the acquaintanceship it evinces with Roman history and literature.

Filippo Strozzi was put to the torture in this fortress prison, without any avowal of the nature sought being obtained from him. Giuliano Gondi was then kidnapped and tortured with the same view. Then the substance of his confessions, or what purported to be such, were sent to the emperor; and an order from him to his commandant of the fortress came back, directing him to deliver up Filippo Strozzi to the Duke Cosimo. These are the facts known to history. And one other completes all that authentic history has to tell on the subject. On the morning of the 18th of December, 1538, Filippo was found dead in his prison.

How he died has always been one of the many mysteries of Italian history. The anonymous writer who has furnished the conclusion of the biography by his brother Lorenzo, not only states as a certain fact that he killed himself with a sword left in his prison by chance by one of his guards, but gives the following document, which he asserts was found after his death in his own handwriting.

'That I may not be any longer in the power of my enemies, whereby, besides being unjustly and cruelly tortured, I might by the force of the torment be led into saying something to the prejudice of my own honour and the injury of my innocent relations and friends, as has happened to the miserable Giuliano Gondi, I, Filippo Strozzi, have come to the determination, dreadful as in respect of my soul it appears to me, to end my life by my own hands. I recommend my soul to God, who is infinite mercy; humbly praying Him, if that He will award it no other good, to grant it at least the sojourn assigned to Cato of Utica, and other such-like virtuous men who have made a similar end. I beg Signor Don Giovanni di Luna, the governor of the fortress, to take a portion of my blood after my death, and to make therewith a pudding,[1] and to send it to the Cardinal Cibo, that he may satiate himself after my death with that which he could never be satiated with during my life; because nothing else was needed to him to reach the papacy,[2] to which he so dishonourably aspired. I beg him (di Luna) to cause my body to be buried in Santa Maria Novella, near to that of my wife, if it shall seem fit to Cibo that I be buried

[1] 'Migliaccio,' literally a black-pudding. I am obliged to translate the abomination as I find it.

[2] 'Nothing save my death;' that is to say, Filippo had at the last election influenced the French cardinals to elect Paul III.

in holy ground. If not, I will lie wherever they may choose to put me.

'I earnestly beg of my sons that they observe the will I have made here in the fortress, which is in the hands of Benvenuto Ulivieri, except that part respecting Bandino; that they will pay Signor Don Giovanni (di Luna) for the many comforts I have received from him, and expenses to which he has been put on my account, for which I have never paid in any way.

'And I beg thee, O Cæsar, with all humility, to inform thyself better respecting this poor city of Florence, having some care for its welfare, if it be not thy intention to destroy it entirely.

'PHILIPPUS STROZZA, jamjam moriturus.'

'Exoriare aliquis ex ossibus meis mei sanguinis ultor.'

Such is the statement, and the document in support of it, put forward by the anonymous biographer. But it is certain that this story of the important prisoner's suicide was but very partially believed at the time. Signor Bigazzi, whose knowledge of the sources of Tuscan history is probably unrivalled, has adduced in a note on this passage[1] of the biography the following extracts from the diaries of three contemporary chroniclers. The first writes:—

'1538. The 14th (an error for 18th) of December, it was known how Filippo Strozzi was found dead in the fortress in which he had been imprisoned for sixteen months; and it is said that he had killed himself with a sword, which he found by chance. And many say that he has been beheaded; and this is more generally believed.'

The second says:—

'On the 18th of December, 1538, Filippo Strozzi was found dead in the fortress near the Porta Faenza, where he has been imprisoned for sixteen months, *and previously*

[1] Vita di Filippo Strozzi, op. cit. p. cxviii.

in other places (this is an error); and it is said that he has been beheaded, which is believed by most persons.'

The third ran thus:—

'On the 18th of December, Filippo Strozzi was found dead in the fortress, where he had remained a prisoner from the day he was taken to the present time. It is said that he has been beheaded. He has been buried where the houses end that extend towards the fort of St. Antonio, near a little shrine which stands there in a field.'

And the historian Segni, who may be considered the best authority for all that was really known, and with most probability believed on the subject,[1] says, after having mentioned the papers which circulated among the people as having been found in Strozzi's handwriting after his death: 'His body was never seen; nor was it ever known in what place he was buried. And a rumour was accredited among the common people that he had killed himself, when he perceived, or thought that he perceived, that he should be delivered into the hands of the executioner to be put to death. But the more probable belief of the few was, that Filippo was put to death by order of the governor, or of the Marchese del Vasto, who had promised not to give him up into the hands of the duke, and that those officers when they heard the decision of the emperor, who wished to do what was agreeable to Duke Cosimo, had caused him to be killed, and then spread a report that he had died by his own hand. It is said also, that those writings which have been published as being by Filippo, were in fact written by Pierfrancesco of Prato, who was the duke's pedagogue when he was a lad. But this story, that Filippo killed himself, was readily believed by many, because he was in their estimation an impious man, and one who did not believe in

[1] Segni, op. cit., vol. ii. p. 212.

Christ. And this led the people to say that God had deservedly chastised him with a punishment, fitting in an exemplary manner for one who had always scoffed at religion.'

'None the less for this, however, is it true,' adds the historian, 'that Filippo possessed rare qualities, worthy of an illustrious and highly-honoured citizen. In point of wealth he stood alone, and not to be compared to any other man whatsoever in Italy. For at his death he was found to be worth three hundred thousand crowns of ready cash, and two hundred thousand crowns in estates, jewels, and other property.'

According to this account it would seem that the imperial officers caused him to be murdered to save the letter of their own promises, and to rescue him from the worse fate of torture and a public execution, which awaited him if he were consigned to his enemies, Cosimo, and his minister, Cardinal Cibo. The circumstances, however, of the duke's old master having been employed to write the paper, which it was intended to attribute to Filippo, would seem to favour the opinion that the murder was done by the duke's order. As for the paper itself, it appears to me to bear many marks of being a forgery.

But there is a paper which Filippo did unquestionably write shortly before his death, and which Signor Bigazzi has given in the volume so often cited, in a facsimile of Strozzi's handwriting. It is his own epitaph, drawn up in two forms, both in Latin. The first, headed, 'In my own country, if in these times it shall be permitted,' consists of the following words only :—

PHILIPPO STROZZÆ.

Satis hoc; cætera norunt omnes.

'To Filippo Strozzi. These words suffice. The rest is known to all,'—a proud, but not an undue nor vain-glorious inscription. Of the second, prepared 'for a cœnotaph in some foreign city,' in case no monument should be permitted to be raised to him in Florence, the same cannot be said. The translation of the great banker's opinion of himself runs as follows:—

'To Filippo Strozzi, by far the most illustrious of all Tuscans in nobility, learning, and wealth; who, when Rome was sacked by the imperial forces, and Pope Clement was besieged there, restored to liberty his country, then reduced to a base slavery. When ten years afterwards he was again opposing resuscitated despotism, being taken prisoner at the castle of Monte Murlo, he was soon after cruelly put to death. His seven surviving sons placed this monument to his memory, amid the tears of all good men. The tyrant did not blush to buy his head,' (interlined 'blood') 'at a vast price; for he could find no means of remaining in security while so powerful an enemy lived. But Liberty, knowing well that all her hopes fell together with him, willed to be buried in the same tomb. Pour forth then, stranger, abundant tears if the Florentine republic is aught to thee; for thou wilt never have to weep the loss of a greater citizen. He lived forty-eight years; ... months, ... days. His last words were: "It is sweet to die by whatsoever death for one's country."'

These were at all events the words that looked best to be said under the circumstances; and therefore Filippo, true to his life-long practice, puts them into his own mouth as his last. How little they represented any real sentiment of his heart, the reader of the foregoing pages need not be told.

The anonymous concluder of the biography has the

following on the personal appearance and habits of his hero, which may help us to realize the pleasant figure of the great banker, capitalist, loan contractor, and roué, as he was wont to be seen in the streets of Florence. 'Filippo,' says he, 'was tall of stature, of cheerful, pleasing face, adust in complexion, agile in person, built for exercise rather than for a life of ease, and agreeable in manner as ever man was. In gestures, deeds, and words he was extremely affable, almost always smiling on first meeting with any one. His step was exceedingly quick, and when his friends would remark on it, he would say that no loss irked him so much as loss of time; and that he did not see why, when he could transport himself quickly from place to place, he should do it slowly. Every day that he could dispose of as he pleased, he was wont to divide into three parts: one of which he gave to his studies, one to his private business, and one to his pleasures. . . . He was always more inclined to pleasure than was perhaps fitting, and that not only from his own inclination, but to accommodate himself to the wishes of his superiors and friends. Whenever he was at any public or private assembly where there were ladies, he would very lightly fall in love; for he was exceedingly inclined to the society of women, and chiefly attached himself to those who were remarkable for elegance and grace of manner, rather than to the merely beautiful in feature. He was exceedingly fond of music, and sang well and accurately. And he was not ashamed to sing the penitential psalms at night in public together with his brother Lorenzo, and others such on holidays. He took much pleasure also in composing in our own tongue both in prose and verse; as may be seen by the translations and madrigals of his which are sung to music at the present day. He was very sumptuous

in his dress; as much so as any other man in the city. He delighted much in travel, and in seeing new manners and people. But his various and many affairs never permitted him to indulge in this desire. To sum up his character in a word, those who were acquainted with literature supposed that he could never have given his attention to anything else; while those who had business relations with him, and knew in how masterly a manner he managed his affairs, could not easily be persuaded that he ever attended to any other matters; and those who knew him as a man of pleasure could scarcely believe that he could ever find time for aught besides.'

Such was Filippo Strozzi: a remarkable and rarely endowed man assuredly; though not one to whom the reader can be invited to accord his admiration or esteem. And yet were he now living among us, with only so much of mitigation of his vices as the improved morality of our age would necessarily insure, he would be one of those whose good qualities the world is eager to dwell on, and to magnify, while it loves to be blind to, their vices and defects. His own countrymen, therefore, may be excused if they have always regarded him somewhat too favourably; if they have been inclined to find some partially effaced outlines of the character of a hero and a patriot, where in truth no faintest elements of either existed; and if the great and splendid capitalist has occupied a place and space in Florentine history to which he was hardly entitled. Had he been suffered to make his peace with Cosimo, as he would have gladly done; to have returned to spend his colossal fortune in outshining all others in the courtier career of demoralization and degradation, which Florentine society entered on at so fast and fatal a pace under 'the Tuscan

Tiberius,' subsequent generations would have heard much less of Filippo Strozzi.

For us, however, the fame-halo which rightfully or wrongfully gathered around the name of the wealthiest Florentine, and by preserving the details of his chequered career, has made this picture such as it is, of an authentic sixteenth-century life possible, must be deemed a fortunate circumstance. Few lives could afford so rich, so highly-coloured, and so many-sided a view of the life of that ever-interesting 'renaissance' time; which (at all events in the land of its cradle) was in truth, if not a death-hour, the beginning of a period of hybernation, from which the awakening is but in our own more fortunate day. Doubtless the social and moral forces were at work in accordance with eternal beneficent laws during this winter-slumber time, as proficuously as the vital forces in the chrysalis, however difficult it may be to trace the exact line and method of their operation. Italy awakes far other than she was when she fell into her three-century-long lethargy. But the impeding powers, against which she has to fight her onward way, are very much less changed—necessarily, since systems based on falsehood, and on narrow interests narrowly understood, have no vital sap and organic growth. The dead wood cannot sprout.

And the story of the last lost fight for social life and liberty, with the parts enacted in that drama by emperors, popes, and kings, is therefore still rich in warning, instruction, and interest for the Italians in their present struggle, and for all those faithful believers in the divine ordinance of human progress, who are watching that struggle with sympathy.

NOTES.

1.—Page 2.

[*Filippo Strozzi.*]

The more correct designation would be 'Filippo *dei* Strozzi.' The proper family name was Strozzo. The citizens of ancient Florence were universally addressed by their christened names, not only by persons of their own class, but by inferiors also. The practice, indeed, is still very general. When a family was designated it was usual to make a plural of the family name. And it was more complimentary to say 'Filippo of the Strozzi clan,' as intimating the importance of the family. Thus the singular of the name, in this as in innumerable other instances, was rarely heard, and soon fell into entire disuse. Then the article, the '*dei*' generally written 'de,' was dropped from carelessness or for brevity, and the name became definitively known only in the plural form.

2.—Page 6.

[*Precisely at daybreak on the 6th of August*, 1489, *the first stone of the Strozzi palace was laid.*]

This was subsequent to the erection of the Pitti palace, now the grand-ducal residence. The popular story, therefore, to the effect that Luca Pitti, a rival merchant, determined to build a house, of which the interior court should be large enough to contain the Strozzi palace, is erroneous. It is said to be a fact that the latter does occupy a space nearly exactly equal to the court-yard of the Pitti palace. And this circumstance doubtless gave rise to the story. Though so much smaller, the Strozzi palace is the finer specimen of the domestic architecture of the period. And it is still inhabited by the family o

its founder, while the more ambitious home of the Pitti has long since passed into other hands!

3.—Page 8.

[*The highly ornamented iron rings of the Strozzi palace.*]

The following amusing notice of the artist, who forged these magnificent specimens of iron work, is to be found in Vasari's life of Cronaca, the architect of the palace.

'All these irons,' says the gossiping biographer, 'were most diligently wrought by Niccolò Grosso Caparra, a Florentine blacksmith. In those wonderful lanthorns (these receptacles for torches are at the four angles of the building; the rings spoken of in the text are let into the wall in a row, at the same altitude along the four façades) may be seen cornices, columns, capitals, and supports, all wrought in iron with extraordinary skill. In modern times no man has produced works in iron of such size and difficulty, and completed with so much science and skill. Niccolò Grosso was a man of eccentric character; reasonable enough in the conduct of his affairs, and not greedy for more than his due gains. He would never give credit to any man for work done; but, on the contrary, always exacted part payment as earnest money. And for this reason Lorenzo de' Medici nicknamed him Caparra (*arra* is money paid before hand for 'earnest;' the French *arrhes*); and by many others he was known by that name. He had put up before his shop a sign, on which was represented the burning of account books. And so when any one asked him for credit, he used to say 'That I can't do; for my books are all burned, and I have no means of writing accounts.' The *Capitani de parte Guelfa* (a board of magistrates so called) ordered of him a pair of andirons. And when they were finished, they sent for them again and again. But he still sent back answer, 'I sweat and labour at this anvil; and I choose to have my money paid down here. . . . . But when they sent again, saying that he had received a part of the money, and that he must therefore send home the goods, for which he should receive entire payment on applying for it, he acknowledged the truth of what they said in some part; and so gave the messenger one andiron, saying, "There, carry them that, for it is theirs. And if they like to send the remainder of the money here, I will deliver the other, which till then is mine." And when the magistrates saw the exquisite workmanship of the piece brought home, they sent him the remainder of the money to his shop; and he then sent them the other andiron. A story is told too that Lorenzo de' Medici wished to order some iron-work of him to send out

of Tuscany, as a specimen of workmanship, and went himself for this purpose to his shop, where by chance he found him busy with work for some poor people, from whom he had received earnest-money. And for all Lorenzo could say, he would not undertake to work for him until he had first served those who, as he said, had come first to the shop, and whose money was as good as Lorenzo's. One day some young men of the city brought him a model, for him to make an instrument for breaking open locks and bolts. But he would undertake no such job; saying that what he was asked to make could only be of service to thieves, or tempters of female honour. The customers when they found that Caparra was firm in refusing to work for them, asked him where in Florence they could get such things made. Whereupon he got into a passion, and heaping abuse on them, drove them out of his shop. He always refused to work for Jews; and declared that their money was bad, and stinking. He always refused to leave Florence, in which he lived and died, though he had invitations with advantageous offers. I have thought it good,' adds Vasari, 'to make this record of the man, because he was in truth of unmatched excellence in his art, and neither has ever had, or will have his equal, as may be particularly seen in these irons and lanthorns of the Strozzi palace.'

It may be mentioned that the original design of the palace was by Benedetto da Maiano. And the building was only intrusted to Cronaca when it was too late to alter this substantially. And Vasari is particularly anxious that it should be understood, that if the interior of the palace, the distribution, and especially the staircase are not what might be expected from the exterior grandeur of the building, the fault must not be attributed to Cronaca, who accomplished wonders, he says, in adapting his designs to what had already been done, but to his predecessor.

4.—Page 10.

[*Lorenzo was the family biographer.*]

The passage in the text extracted from his life of his father is printed in Gaye's *Carteggio d' Artisti. Firenze*, 1839, vol. i. page 354. But the whole of Lorenzo's life of his father has more recently been printed (privately on occasion of a marriage in the Strozzi family) by Signor Pietro Bigazzi, secretary to the Acad. della Crusca, and the Abate Bini, archivist to the Strozzi family. Lorenzo's larger and more important work on the life of his brother was first printed in Burmann's great collection; and recently by Signor Bigazzi, as a preface to Niccolini's tragedy of 'Filippo Strozzi.' It has also been translated into French by Jean-Baptiste Requier. La Haye et Paris, 1762.

5.—Page 10.

[*Those in power.*]

That is to say, Lorenzo de' Medici, the Magnificent. It will be useful for the understanding of Filippo Strozzi's story, to bear in mind the successive *ins* and *outs* of the Medici.

1433, 3rd October. They were driven from the city in consequence of the jealousy occasioned by the growing power of Cosmo, *pater patriæ.*

1434, 1st October. Cosmo and his friends were reinstated; and gradually destroying every trace of republican freedom, continued in ever-increasing power till, in

1494, 8th November. Piero, Cosmo's grandson, and the whole Medicean faction, were driven from the city, in consequence of Piero's unpatriotic treaty with Charles VIII. of France, then invading Italy. It was on this occasion, that Pier Capponi, tearing up the obnoxious treaty before the face of Charles, spoke the memorable words: 'You may sound your trumpets; and we will ring our bells.'

1512, 14th September. They are recalled, the Cardinal Giovanni, Lorenzo the Magnificent's son, afterwards Leo X., being then the head of the family, and the government being shortly after placed in the hands of Lorenzo, the son of Piero, and nephew of Leo X.

1527, 17th May. They were once more exiled in consequence of the downfall of Clement VII., then head of the family after the sack of Rome. Alessandro, the bastard son (probably) of Pope Clement, who was afterwards first Duke of Florence, and Ippolito, bastard son of Giuliano, Leo X.'s brother, being then the only scions of the elder branch of the Medici, were on this occasion conducted from the city by Filippo Strozzi.

1530, 20th August. The Medicean rule was finally established after the fall of the republic, at the celebrated siege; and Alessandro was made duke.

The Medici were therefore—

From 1432 to 1434 Out.
From 1434 to 1494 In.
From 1494 to 1512 Out.
From 1512 to 1527 In.
From 1527 to 1530 Out.

6.—Page 19.

The account given by Vasari in his life of Fra Bartolomeo, more

usually called among his own contemporaries Baccio della Porta, is worth extracting.

'It came to pass that, as Fra Girolamo (Savonarola) continued his preaching, and day after day exclaimed from the pulpit that wanton pictures, and music, and love-stories, and songs often lead souls into sin, the people were persuaded that it was wrong to keep painted figures of men and women from the nude in houses where there were young persons, so that the citizens were excited by his eloquence; and as it had been customary in carnival time in the city to make bonfires in the squares, and on the evening of Shrove Tuesday to set fire to them according to ancient practice, dancing round them in a wanton manner, men and women hand in hand, and singing songs, Fra Girolamo in the carnival of this year persuaded them to bring to the usual spot on the accustomed day, a vast quantity of pictures and sculptures from the nude, many of them by great artists, and books, and lutes, and song-music; so that the loss, especially in painting, was very considerable. Baccio carried thither all his studies of designs from the naked; and Lorenzo di Credi, and many others, who were called 'Piagnoni' (the nickname of Savonarola's followers), did the same.'

7.—Page 21.

For fear that I may have done less than justice to Girolamo Benivieni's verses, I here give the reader an opportunity of seeing them in the original :—

'Non fu mai più bel solazzo,
Più giocondo, nè maggiore,
Che per zelo e per amore
Di Gesù devenir pazzo.'
'Sempre cerca, onora, ed ama
Quel che il savio ha in odio tanto,
Povertà, dolori e pianto
Il Cristian, perch' egli è pazzo.
Non fu mai, et da capo.
'Discipline e penitenza
Son le sue prime delizie;
E i suoi gaudi e le letizie
I martir, perch' egli è pazzo.'
'Non fu mai,' et da capo.
'Ognuno gridi com' io grido
Sempre pazzo, pazzo, pazzo.'

The second runs thus in the original :—

'Io vo' darti, amima mia,
Un rimedio sol, che vale
Quanto ogn' altro a ciascun male.
Che si chiama la pazzia.'
'To' tre once almen di speme,
Tre di fede, e sei di amore,
Due di pianto, e poni insieme
Tutto al foco del amore.
Fa dipoi bollir tre ore;
Premi infine, e aggiungi tanto
D' umiltà e dolor quanto
Basta a far questa pazzia.'

8.—Page 28.

Lorenzo Strozzi, in his life of Filippo, says that general opinion marked out the Cardinal de' Medici for the papacy, 'on account of his unblemished life;' *per l'ottima vita sua*. Considering that Lorenzo was a strict puritan and follower of Savonarola, and all his life a consistent opponent and hater of the Medici; and bearing in mind on the other hand what we know of the life and morality of Leo X., this eulogium is strange enough. And we must suppose, either that the average character and conduct of popes and cardinals in those days were such as to lead even a puritan of Savonarola's school to hail an example of tolerably decent habits among the higher clergy, as a happy exception worthy of all praise and encouragement, or that the caution and prudent decorum of Leo so effectually imposed upon the contemporary outside world, as to keep it in entire ignorance of much that tell-tale history has revealed.

9.—Page 29.

[*Six thousand crowns.*]

The historian Segni, in his life of Niccolò Caponi (p. 281, vol. iii. Edit. Milano, 1805), says the dower of Clarice was seven thousand crowns; and adds the remark that it was considered at that time 'inordinate, and exceeding all bounds of civic usage.' Lorenzo Strozzi's account of the negotiations for his brother's marriage is naturally so written as to make out, as far as possible, his brother's innocence of all Medicean tendencies in the matter. But Segni's cursory notice of the marriage attributes much more of the appearance of a dynastic plot to

the whole affair. 'It was in great part brought to bear,' he says, 'by Lucrezia, the sister of Giovanni, afterwards Leo X., who was married to Jacopo Salviati. She was,' says Segni, 'a woman of high spirit and strong intelligence, who was very active in keeping together the old adherents and friends of her house, and intriguing to make fresh ones. And she was especially eager to make the match with Strozzi, knowing that it would have the effect of rendering him so suspected by the popular party, as probably to throw him eventually into the Medicean faction.

'Secretly as the thing was carried on,' says Segni, 'a rumour of what Filippo was doing reached Niccolò Capponi, who spoke to him on the subject. At first he denied that there was any truth in the report; but when pressed, admitted it, but declared that matters had gone too far for it to be possible for him to draw back. Upon which, Niccolò said, "You will one day see, Filippo, when it will be too late to remedy it, that I am telling you the truth, and that this marriage will be your ruin."'

10.—Page 37.

[*It is worth noting here.*]

The paragraph following these words is reproduced from a volume by me on the 'Girlhood of Catherine de' Medici.' Having been led in that work to speak of Filippo Strozzi's marriage, and being struck by the remarkable illustration the proceedings concerning it afforded of the character of the Florentine government of the period, I there placed in an appendix a translation of the passages of Lorenzo Strozzi's biography of his brother, which relate them. The defence offered by Strozzi, when before the magistrates, as given in the text, will also be found in the same place. But as so remarkable a document is essential to a right narrative of Filippo's life, and a just appreciation of his character, and as I cannot venture to refer my present readers to that work for it, I have not hesitated to reprint it in the text.

11.—Page 163.

[*Representation of the house.*]

It is strange how completely this was the case; and it is difficult to understand how and why it came to pass that it was so. Filippo Strozzi holds so marked a place in the history of Florence, that his name, and in a general way his history, is known to all educated Italians. But Filippo is universally supposed to have been the elder brother. I

have consulted many of the Florentines most conversant with the history of their country, with a view to elucidating the causes of the younger son of the great patrician house of Strozzi having thus by general consent assumed the position of its elder and representative. But not only was I unable to obtain the slightest assistance towards an explanation of the circumstance, but I almost invariably found that those I spoke with supposed that Filippo had been the elder, and Lorenzo the younger brother.

12.—Page 213.

[*A noble Florentine lady.*]

Lorenzo Strozzi, the biographer of Filippo, says that he will not mention the lady's name out of respect for her family. But Rastrelli, the biographer of Alessandro, less scrupulous, tells us that she was Alessandra de Mozzi, wife of Lamberto Sachetti, and one of the most beautiful women of her day.

13.—Page 226.

[*His kinswoman Catherine.*]

All the Italian writers, when they have occasion to speak of the relationship between Clement and Catherine de' Medici, call her his niece. But she was nothing of the sort, according to our meaning of the word. If any reader has any curiosity to know what was the exact relationship between them, he may find it in the author's 'Girlhood of Catherine de' Medici.

14.—Page 283.

[*Such reconciliation.*]

Another instance, more strange than that mentioned in the foregoing note, of the looseness with which the Italian writers used terms of relationship, is observable in Lorenzo Strozzi's account of these quarrels between Ippolito and Alessandro. He repeatedly calls them brothers, and accuses the latter of *fratricide* when he poisoned Ippolito. The distant relationship which really existed between them has been pointed out in a former chapter, and it is impossible to suppose that Lorenzo Strozzi thought that they were really brothers. But they had been brought up together by Clement as if they had been such. The general notion of their standing in a relationship to each other similar to that of brotherhood was thus engendered in the writer's mind; and that was sufficient for Tuscan careless inaccuracy to write them down brothers.

15.—Page 349.

[*The original, which may be found in the note.*]

It ran thus:—

'Invisum ferro Laurens dum percutit hostem
Quod premeret patriæ libera colla suæ,
Te ne hic, inquit, patior, qui ferre tyrannos
Vix olim Romæ marmoreos potui.'

16.—Page 372.

[*A curious paper left by Filippo.*]

The following are some of the curious entries in this list of expenses:—

'The sack of Rome. I put no figure against this item, for I cannot estimate the loss within many thousands of crowns.

'My journey to Marseilles, and legation in France, 3000 crowns.

'Spent from the death of Clement to that of Alessandro, in guards for my personal safety, in helping the exiles, in sending messengers into Spain and elsewhere, 2000 crowns.

'Money paid to the corporation of Florence for the last ten years. A very large sum; for both under the Medici and in the time of the popular government my taxes have been the heaviest in the city; and if account be taken of tithes, arbitrary imposts, salt dues, and taxes, together with the money due to me from the *Abbondanza* fund, I think the sum will not differ much from 10,000 crowns.

'Losses suffered in the Florentine confiscation in cattle, household furniture, and interest of capital money, I am unable to estimate exactly; but on counting the expense of refurnishing the house and estates, it will be found that the profit to the city was small, and my loss very great.'

The following two entries are very remarkable, as instances of that extraordinary depreciation in the value of all property at Rome, which followed the increasing probability of the convocation of an œcumenical council, which it was thought would make havoc with the immense mass of purchased offices, which papal corruption, especially of late years, had created. A universal panic was the result of this danger looming ever larger in the distance, and all investments at Rome felt the consequences of it.

'The house of the bank in Rome, bought of Luigi Gaddi, in execu-

tion of a judicial sentence, for 13,000 crowns, now worth 6000, entails a loss of 7000 crowns.

'The house in the Borgo, which cost me 7000, is worth now 3000 crowns, and entails a loss of 4000.'

The entire amount of the expenses and losses set down in this list reaches the enormous sum of 298,680 crowns; and when it is remembered, that to form an approximative idea of the value represented by these figures in the money of our own day, we must multiply them by at least ten, or, in other words, set down each crown as representing somewhere about fifty shillings, and that the sum thus calculated would be 746,700*l.*, it will help us to form some idea of the wealth which supported losses to such an extent and yet remained enormous.

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